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**The Women Who Leave:  
Irish Women Writing on Emigration**

**by**

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of Doctor of Philosophy in English Literature

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### DECLARATION

This thesis is my own work. No part of it has been submitted for a degree at another university.

The following book chapter, based on the material arising from my work on the thesis, has been published; it was submitted after the beginning of my period of study:

“‘The unfettered play of their own nature’: Rosa Mulholland and the Literature of Emigration’ in *Écrivaines irlandaises*, ed. by Bertrand Cardin and Sylvie Mikowski (Caen: *Presses universitaires de Caen*, 2014), pp. 39-49

## ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the relationship between *fin-de-siècle* anti-emigration propaganda and fiction written by upper middle-class Irish women. Specifically, it examines the ways in which Catholic authors used the medium of fiction to propound an anti-emigration message analogous to that found in Catholic and nationalist press. Often at stake in their work is the degree to which the peasant female emigrant is to blame for the act of emigration, and the degree of agency she possesses in relation to the events or conditions that lead to this event. Class is a dominant determinant of agency in the depiction of the emigrants' actions and decisions, as peasant and gentry emigrants are treated differently; the authors' own class is also key in determining the stance they take on these decisions. In all of these treatments, the common themes throughout the study are the construction of Ireland as 'Holy Ireland', a haven of moral safety and spiritual regeneration, the ways in which the difference in authors' political intent affects their treatment of the emigrant female, and the degree of realism with which the protagonist and her context are addressed.

The authors under discussion, Mary Butler, Katharine Tynan, Rosa Mulholland, and Geraldine Cummins, though well-known in their time, have been almost completely forgotten, along with their literary and cultural contribution to Ireland's history. Aside from contemporary criticism and reviews of their work, relatively little information exists about the authors under discussion. Consequently, this study seeks to initiate a conversation about the authors and the way their adaptation of Catholic nationalist discourse participated in emigration debates. This thesis is the first full-length study to examine the works of authors who adapted literary themes in order to create a discourse that actively discouraged young women from leaving Ireland during a period of female-dominated emigration.

## Introduction: The Women Who Leave

### The Emigrant Girl<sup>1</sup>

A Word with you, Father. The steamer  
That bears me from Ireland away  
Is ready to start with those hundreds  
Of souls you see thronging the quay.

I come from the heart of the country,  
Not a face in the crowd do I know;  
But the smile of the priest gives me courage,  
And cheers me wherever I go.

In our home by the banks of the Ara,  
There used to be comfort, ochone!  
Till the seasons changed so, that the harvest  
Scarce gave back the seed that was sown.

The landlord lived over in London,  
And cared not about our distress,  
But sent for his rent every gale-day,  
Still asking for more, 'stead of less.

Very soon we were pinched by the hunger—  
My father, God rest him, broke down,  
And sleeps in the little green churchyard  
That lies on the skirts of the town.

Then I begged of my mother to let me  
Sail out to the land of the West,  
And try if my strength could not purchase  
Better raiment and food for the rest.

With tears she agreed, and we gathered,  
By ways that the poor only know,  
The money to pay for my passage,  
And now I am ready to go.

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<sup>1</sup> The poem cites that 'This incident occurred at Queenstown a few weeks ago.' D.G., 'The Emigrant Girl', *the Irish Monthly*, 7 (1879), 532–33.



But I find I've too much, so I want you  
To take what remains in my purse,  
And send it all back to my mother—  
I'm needy, but *her* needs are worse.

Address: 'Widow Sheehan, near Bansha.'  
No fear of its going astray;  
Though little, 'twill keep away hunger,  
And put off the much dreaded day.

And now, father, give me your blessing,  
The bell on the steamer has rung;  
'Tis hard to be leaving poor Ireland,  
But then I am healthful and young.

And after a while Joe and Charlie  
Will have grown up both willing and strong;  
And then I'll come back to poor mother,  
And care for her all the day long.

'The Emigrant Girl', a poem written by 'D.G.' and published in the Catholic journal the *Irish Monthly* in 1879, is in many ways representative of the style of anti-emigration writing that dominated publications by Catholic and nationalist writers in the final decades of the nineteenth century. Written after D.G. ostensibly witnessed the departure which 'occurred at Queenstown a few weeks ago', the vignette, like much of contemporary anti-emigration writing, demonstrates the wedding of fiction and political propaganda. Thick with pathos, the poem includes key aspects of what might loosely be termed an anti-emigration genre: the young female peasant's reluctant departure (provoked by the economic penury of the rural peasantry associated with agricultural decline) elicits in the reader a sense of the loss of Ireland's youth and corresponding reproductive potential. Amidst images of death and hunger evocative of the Famine era, D.G. invokes landlordism as the culprit and employs a priest as spiritual and fiduciary intermediary,<sup>2</sup> charging him with the management of the émigrée's finances which will keep her widowed mother solvent until chain migration<sup>3</sup> will set the rest of the family in motion to follow her. The poem—published in a ground-breaking Catholic literary journal of the period—is representative in tone, tropes, and subject matter of anti-emigration journalism, anecdotal journalism, short and novel-length fiction of the era. Although the portrayal of 'The Emigrant Girl' is far more sympathetic to the emigrant's decision to leave and cognizant of her circumstances than many of the longer works

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<sup>2</sup> Sarah Roddy notes that 'before the arrival of a post office in every parish, and before the advent of the international postal money order in 1871, the priest often acted as an addressee for emigrants' letters and as banker for remittances.' Sarah Roddy, 'The Spoils of Spiritual Empire: Emigrant Contributions to Nineteenth-Century Irish Catholic Church-Building', *Journal of Irish and Scottish Studies*, 5 (2012), 95–116 (p. 113).

<sup>3</sup> The phenomenon of family or community members following each other to a particular destination, often with the aid of remittances.

examined throughout this study, it nonetheless employs a set of familiar literary conventions that seek to influence readers and that allude to larger socio-political issues through pathos-filled depictions of emigration.

Given emigration's central place within Irish history,<sup>4</sup> it is not surprising that there should exist a considerable body of work on emigration as a historical phenomenon. Late twentieth- and early twenty-first discussions of emigration have been informed by the work of a large number of historians: Kerby Miller's seminal study *Emigrants and Exiles*, Sheridan Gilley's and Sarah Roddy's work on the Catholic Church and the Irish emigrant population in the nineteenth century, and Timothy Guinnane's and David Fitzpatrick's long-ranging views of emigration throughout various points in Irish history all serve to clarify and elucidate the image of the emigrant as he (*sic*) existed in the popular imagination and in reality.<sup>5</sup> Louise Ryan's studies regarding

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<sup>4</sup> Though this thesis almost exclusively addresses the theme of emigration in the context of international emigration, I wish here to state that, like Marjorie Howes, there are 'various kinds of geographical movement that I am grouping under the heading of migration: emigration, [and] rural-urban migration.' Marjorie Howes, 'Tradition, Gender, and Migration in "The Dead," or: How Many People Has Gretta Conroy Killed?', *Yale Journal of Criticism*, 15 (2002), 149–71 (p. 151).

<sup>5</sup> Kerby Miller, *Ireland and Irish America: Culture, Class, and Transatlantic Migration* (Dublin: Field Day Publications, 2008); Kerby Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); Kerby Miller, 'Emigration, Ideology, and Identity in Post-Famine Ireland', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, 75 (1986), 515–27; Kerby Miller, "'For Love and Liberty': Irish Women, Migration and Domesticity in Ireland and America, 1815-1920", in *Irish Women and Irish Migration*, ed. by Patrick O'Sullivan, *The Irish World Wide History, Heritage, Identity* (London: Leicester University Press, 1995), iv, 41–65; Sheridan Gilley, 'The Roman Catholic Church and the Nineteenth-Century Irish Diaspora', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 35 (1984), 188–207; Sheridan Gilley, 'Roman Catholicism and the Irish in England', *Immigrants & Minorities*, 18 (1999), 147–67; Sheridan Gilley, 'Roman Catholicism and the Irish in England', in *The Great Famine and Beyond: Irish Migrants in Britain in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, ed. by Donald MacRaild (Dublin; Portland, OR: Irish Academic Press, 2000), pp. 147–67; Timothy Guinnane, *The Vanishing Irish: Households, Migration, and the Rural Economy in Ireland, 1850-1914* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); David Fitzpatrick, 'Irish Farming Families Before the First World War', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 25 (1983), 339–74; David Fitzpatrick, 'The Geography of Irish Nationalism 1910-1921', *Past & Present*, 1978, 113–44; David Fitzpatrick, *Irish Emigration 1801-1921*, *Studies in Irish Economic and Social History*, No. 1 (Dublin:

women's emigration between the wars and Bronwen Walter's and Breda Gray's work on contemporary female returnees have focused on the gendered aspect of emigration and exposed the key differences that lie in the general perception of the female emigrant as opposed to the male and, crucially, the way in which she herself experiences emigration, displacement, and return.<sup>6</sup> Ellen McWilliams' study of *Women and Exile in Contemporary Fiction* also engages with the theme of the woman emigrant, but, as the

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Economic and Social History Society of Ireland, 1984); David Fitzpatrick, 'Irish in America: Exiles Or Escapers?', *Reviews in American History*, 15 (1987), 272–78; David Fitzpatrick, 'Emigration, 1801–70', in *Ireland under the Union, 1801–1870*, ed. by W.E. Vaughan, *A New History of Ireland* (Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1989), 562–657; David Fitzpatrick, 'Emigration, 1871–1921', in *Ireland under the Union, II: 1870–1921*, ed. by W.E. Vaughan, *A New History of Ireland* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003), 606–89; Sarah Roddy, "'The Emigrants' Friend"? Guides for Irish Emigrants by Clergymen, C. 1830–82', in *Visual, Material and Print Culture in Nineteenth-Century Ireland*, ed. by Ciara Breathnach and Catherine Lawless (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2010), pp. 247–56; Roddy, 'The Spoils of Spiritual Empire: Emigrant Contributions to Nineteenth-Century Irish Catholic Church-Building'; Sarah Roddy, 'Spiritual Imperialism and the Mission of the Irish Race: The Catholic Church and Emigration from Nineteenth-Century Ireland', *Irish Historical Studies*, xxxviii (2013), 600–619.

<sup>6</sup> Louise Ryan, 'Constructing "Irishwoman": Modern Girls and Comely Maidens', *Irish Studies Review*, 6 (1998), 263–72; Louise Ryan, 'Negotiating Modernity and Tradition: Newspaper Debates on the "Modern Girl" in the Irish Free State', *Journal of Gender Studies*, 7 (1998), 181–97; Louise Ryan, 'Irish Female Emigration in the 1930s: Transgressing Space and Culture', *Gender, Place & Culture*, 8 (2001), 271–82; Louise Ryan, *Gender, Identity, and the Irish Press, 1922–1937: Embodying the Nation* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2002); Louise Ryan, 'Sexualising Emigration: Discourses of Irish Female Emigration in the 1930s', in *Women's Studies International Forum*, 2002, xxv, 51–65; Louise Ryan, 'Moving Spaces and Changing Places: Irish Women's Memories of Emigration to Britain in the 1930s', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 29 (2003), 67–82 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1369183032000076722>>; Louise Ryan, 'Leaving Home: Irish Press Debates on Female Employment, Domesticity and Emigration to Britain in the 1930s', *Women's History Review*, 12 (2003), 387–406 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09612020300200365>>; Louise Ryan, 'Family Matters: (e)migration, Familial Networks and Irish Women in Britain', *The Sociological Review*, 52 (2004), 351–70; Bronwen Walter, 'Gendered Irishness in Britain: Changing Constructions', in *Ireland and Cultural Theory*, ed. by Colin Graham and Richard Kirkland (London: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 77–95; Bronwen Walter, 'Inside and Outside the Pale: Diaspora Experiences of Irish Women', in *Migration and Gender in the Developed World*, ed. by P. Boyle and K. Halfacree (London; New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 310–24; Bronwen Walter, 'Irish Women in the Diaspora: Exclusions and Inclusions', *Women's Studies International Forum*, 27 (2004), 369–84; Breda Gray, 'Gendering the Irish Diaspora: Questions of Enrichment, Hybridization and Return', in *Women's Studies International Forum*, 2000, xxiii, 167–85; Breda Gray, 'Longings and Belongings - Gendered Spatialities of Irishness', *Irish Studies Review*, 7 (1999), 193–210; Breda Gray, *Women and the Irish Diaspora*, Transformations (London; New York: Routledge, 2004); Breda Gray, 'Curious Hybridities', *Irish Studies Review*, 14 (2006), 207–23 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09670880600603638>>; Breda Gray and Louise Ryan, 'The Politics of Irish Identity and the Interconnections between Feminism, Nationhood, and Colonialism', in *Nation, Empire, Colony: Historicizing Gender and Race*, ed. by Ruth Roach Pierson (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), pp. 121–38.

title would suggest, the works and authors studied fall outside the confines of the Literary Revival,<sup>7</sup> though the work does provide a contextual background.<sup>8</sup>

Correspondingly, a large body of work exists that deals with the literature of exile in terms of Irish writers living abroad, but these studies tend to focus on the biographical details of the writer himself (their subjects being almost exclusively male) as exile rather than Irish authors writing within Ireland about the emigrant experience. Böss and Nordin's 2006 anthology *Re-Mapping Exile: Realities and Metaphors in Irish Literature and History* begins to address this gap, and even includes a rare essay on Rosa Mulholland's work.<sup>9</sup> Patrick Ward's *Exile, Emigration and Irish Writing* (2002), again, deals almost exclusively with canonical male authors (Kickham, Mangan, Joyce, and Moore, for example) and specifically the male emigrant experience.<sup>10</sup> While Ward devotes eight pages of his volume to the discussion of the image of the female emigrant in literature—and is correct in noting that when 'the popular tradition does acknowledge the fact of female emigration, it does so in order to admonish [and] discourage'<sup>11</sup>—he insists that women were 'almost totally silent in the discourses surrounding emigration'<sup>12</sup> and not one female author is mentioned.

Novelists Seán Ó Faoláin and Liam O'Flaherty both famously wrote about emigration, though slightly later and therefore in response to a different socio-political

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<sup>7</sup> The literary arm of a cultural revival that began in the late nineteenth century.

<sup>8</sup> Ellen McWilliams, *Women and Exile in Contemporary Irish Fiction* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

<sup>9</sup> *Re-Mapping Exile: Realities and Metaphors in Irish Literature and History*, ed. by Michael Böss, Irene Gilsenan Nordin, and Britta Olinder, The Dolphin, 34 (Denmark; Lancaster: Aarhus University Press, 2005).

<sup>10</sup> Patrick Ward, *Exile, Emigration, and Irish Writing* (Dublin; Portland, OR: Irish Academic Press, 2002).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 156.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 152.

context; Ward notes that Ó Faoláin's *Come Back to Erin* (1940) details the concept of 'an Irish exile living at home'<sup>13</sup>—that is, a sense of estrangement from within contemporary Ireland rather than the traditional emigrant experience and is once again told from the male perspective. In fact, due perhaps to the wealth of studies that examine the Revival as both a literary and socio-political phenomenon, relatively little work has yet been done that targets the topic of anti-emigration literature of the period specifically (not to mention that written by females)<sup>14</sup> as anti-emigration fiction was most often written by authors whose work falls outside the Revivalist canon, many of whom were women. While it could be said that Katharine Tynan, and to some extent Geraldine Cummins, were loosely associated with the Literary Revival, both writers' emphasis on women's issues—and the ambivalence of the female emigrant—set their works outside the ideological confines of a nationalist movement that privileged women's importance within the domestic sphere.

Notable exceptions include James Murphy's excellent study *Catholic Fiction and Social Reality in Ireland, 1873-1922* (1997) and John Wilson Foster's *Irish Novels 1890-1940: New Bearings in Culture and Fiction* (2008) both of which do much to bridge the gap not merely in terms of anti-emigration literature (which is addressed in both cases within the context of the more realist 'social problem novel')<sup>15</sup> but also literature by

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<sup>13</sup> Ward cites Benedict Kiely's *Modern Irish Fiction: A Critique*, p. 112. Ibid, p. 8.

<sup>14</sup> Potts asserts that women writers were largely excluded in the Revival because they were considered 'too popular, too lowbrow, too sentimental.' Donna Potts, 'Irish Poetry and the Modernist Canon: A Reappraisal of Katherine Tynan', in *Border Crossings: Irish Women Writers and National Identities* (Tuscaloosa; London: University of Alabama Press, 2000), pp. 79–99 (p. 89).

<sup>15</sup> Foster defines the problem novel as one which 'dealt with social ills more specific than the difficult transition from the nineteenth to the twentieth century', placing it within the category of 'didactic fiction'.

women of the *fin-de-siècle* period.<sup>16</sup> Due to the broad scope of these works, however, the focus on particular authors and on anti-emigration literature as a phenomenon is, of necessity, somewhat limited. This study seeks to address this gap, considering the ways in which Catholic nationalist anti-emigration propaganda bled into fiction and the ways in which Catholic authors borrowed propagandist techniques, appealing to a popular reading public.

### Historical context

Between 1881 and 1910, over three quarters of a million people left Ireland.<sup>17</sup> According to David Fitzpatrick, around 1890, ‘only three-fifths of those born in Ireland were still at home, with three million living overseas’, making emigration ‘an expected stage in the cycle of [peasant] life’.<sup>18</sup> Clear notes that while emigrants’ most popular destination was North America, an estimated 300,000 left for Australia between 1851 and 1890, roughly 2,000 went to New Zealand between 1871 and 1920, and a handful to South Africa, South America, and India.<sup>19</sup> While pre-Famine- and Famine-era emigrants tended to be the poorest of Ireland’s peasantry—cottiers and small farmers from mostly Western counties who fled as a family unit out of sheer economic necessity—post-Famine emigration was more of an individual choice, often motivated by personal ambition by

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In a chapter devoted specifically to the social problem novel, he employs several of Mulholland’s novels as examples of this genre, including specifically *Father Tim*, *Norah of Waterford*, and *Marcella Grace*. John Foster, *Irish Novels, 1890-1940 : New Bearings in Culture and Fiction* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 71, 119.

<sup>16</sup> James Murphy, *Catholic Fiction and Social Reality in Ireland, 1873-1922* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997); John Foster.

<sup>17</sup> Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, p. 582.

<sup>18</sup> Fitzpatrick, *Irish Emigration 1801-1921*, pp. 5, 29.

<sup>19</sup> Caitríona Clear, *Social Change and Everyday Life in Ireland, 1850-1922* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), pp. 57–58.

those ‘simply seeking a better life abroad.’<sup>20</sup> The widespread adoption of impartible inheritance, a post-Famine phenomenon whereby only a single child was allowed to inherit the family land, made it increasingly difficult for couples to envision marriage and the establishment of an economically viable household. Fitzpatrick notes that ‘in rural areas the acquisition of spouse and farm became almost inseparable’, exacerbating high celibacy rates.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, the post-Famine shift in land usage from tillage to pasturage rendered superfluous much of the agricultural work force—including young women who had once been essential to manual work on small family farms<sup>22</sup>—leaving them little choice but to seek work elsewhere.

These economic constrictions, compounded by the increasingly invasive and socially restrictive role of the Catholic Church in the daily lives of rural peasants (Brown notes that the Church used its ‘authoritative position in Irish society to preach a sexual morality of severe restrictiveness’ and a ‘rigid conformism in a strictly enforced sexual code’),<sup>23</sup> gave many young women the impetus to leave. Miller notes that in post-Famine Ireland, the three dominant social forces were the ‘strong-farmer *type* of rural Irish family,’ the Catholic Church, and Irish nationalism, suggesting the authority that each held over potential emigrants.<sup>24</sup> The influence of these social and political forces, and their active discouragement of individual ambition over familial obligation,

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<sup>20</sup> Guinnane, p. 108; Miller also discusses the subject of young emigrant domestic workers and individual ambition. Miller, *Ireland and Irish America*, pp. 300–326.

<sup>21</sup> R. F. Foster, *The Oxford History of Ireland* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 176.

<sup>22</sup> MacPherson notes that ‘the number of female agricultural laborers [*sic*] fell from 27,000 in 1891 to 5,000 twenty years later.’ Guinnane, pp. 54–55; James MacPherson, “‘Ireland Begins in the Home’: Women, Irish National Identity, and the Domestic Sphere in the Irish Homestead, 1896-1912.’, *Eire-Ireland*, 36 (2001), 131–52 (p. 132).

<sup>23</sup> Terence Brown, *Ireland : A Social and Cultural History, 1922-1985* (London: Fontana, 1985), p. 39.

<sup>24</sup> Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, p. 124.



frequently rendered the decision to emigrate for personal enrichment subject to social condemnation. Nonetheless, due to dysfunctional and inefficient farming practices (Fitzpatrick, for instance, notes that even in 1917 there were only 70 tractors in the entire country),<sup>25</sup> remittances were an important source of income for families remaining on the land, hastening the emigration of superfluous children.

By the 1880s, competition for fares rendered transportation to the United States more affordable, facilitating the increase in the number of emigrants: an estimated 770,706 Irish men and women emigrated between 1881 and 1890, as opposed to 623,933 in the previous decade.<sup>26</sup> The typical profile of the emigrant was, as often as not, young (Clear notes that approximately 80 per cent of emigrants between the Famine and Independence/Partition were between the ages of 18 and 30, 'clustered at the younger rather than the older end of this range'),<sup>27</sup> single, and female. Unlike other European migrant groups, young women tended to migrate as often—or in some years more often than—their male counterparts;<sup>28</sup> they also tended to travel further and unaccompanied, particularly toward the end of the century. While Irish men were more likely to migrate to 'British dominions',<sup>29</sup> women tended to settle in the United States where, according to Hasia Diner, 'their move almost universally constituted a positive upgrading of their status by bringing them to a society that offered greater respect and

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<sup>25</sup> R. F. Foster, p. 178.

<sup>26</sup> W.E. Vaughn and A.J. Fitzpatrick, eds. *Irish Historical Statistics: Population, 1821-1971* (Dublin, 1978) as quoted in Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, pp. 570–571.

<sup>27</sup> Clear, *Social Change and Everyday Life in Ireland, 1850-1922*, p. 57.

<sup>28</sup> Nolan notes that between the years 1891-1900, 231,956 women left Ireland versus 201,570 men. Janet Nolan, *Ourselves Alone : Women's Emigration from Ireland, 1885-1920* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1989), p. 98.

<sup>29</sup> Fitzpatrick, *Irish Emigration 1801-1921*, p. 7.

paid greater homage to women and women's activities.'<sup>30</sup> Though this is perhaps something of an overstatement considering the fact that many young women came over as unskilled domestic labour, certainly life outside of Ireland provided them with greater social and economic freedom.

Emigration by the Irish upper middle-class,<sup>31</sup> by contrast, tells an entirely different story. While members of middle-class families often emigrated on the basis of financial necessity, their departure was regarded differently by peasants and middle-class alike: military posts taken in the colonies or entrepreneurial ventures in the New World were positively viewed as opportunities for social and financial advancement. And, as we will discuss later in this study, the middle-class's relationship with the land itself was viewed differently from that of the peasantry by those representing Irish society in fiction, allowing Revivalists and nationalist politicians to construct, appeal to, and exhort conformity in an image of the Catholic peasant Irishman or woman without demanding similar conformity of the middle-class. Furthermore, at the same time that a rising middle-class of strong farmers, shop keepers, and merchants grew in economic dominance, as Foster asserts, 'the writing was on the wall for many of the [former] landlord class' who were 'disadvantaged by low levels of rent returns and mounting debts to be serviced' and therefore forced to seek new sources of income elsewhere.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Hasia Diner, *Erin's Daughters in America : Irish Immigrant Women in the Nineteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), p. 72.

<sup>31</sup> Here I follow Murphy's lead in designating five distinct and often conflicting classes in Ireland around the turn of the twentieth century: 'the gentry, the upper middle class, the lower middle class, and intelligentsia, and urban working class, and the peasantry.' James Murphy, *Catholic Fiction and Social Reality in Ireland*, pp. 6–7.

<sup>32</sup> R. F. Foster, p. 173.

As Revivalist writers sought to link the identity of the peasant with the land from which he (or, at least as often, she) was forced to emigrate, middle-class movement within Ireland were more fluid, and travel between countries, even for long periods, was considered normal and socially acceptable.

Miller asserts that well into the twentieth century nationalists and clerical leaders ‘never tired of “reminding” their audiences that the Irish were being “driven out of Erin”’<sup>33</sup>—propounding the image of the emigrating Irishman as ‘exile’—one who is forced to leave against his will. In contrast to the exile motif, however, were the thousands of emigrants in search of a higher standard of living and more liberal socioeconomic conditions—experiencing what Aidan Arrowsmith asserts became ‘less a case of enforced banishment and more an escape route from cultural paralysis.’<sup>34</sup> This manner in which emigration was promoted and politicised—the pitiable exile versus the selfish emigrant—reaches to the heart of discussions of anti-emigration literature. As this study will show, despite the fiduciary necessity of peasant women’s emigration, both nationalist and Catholic leaders found it advantageous to depict their departure as ‘emigration’ rather than ‘exile’: self-interested, dangerous, immoral, and traitorous.

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<sup>33</sup> Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, p. 4.

<sup>34</sup> Aidan Arrowsmith, ‘Debating Diasporic Identity: Nostalgia, (post) Nationalism, “Critical Traditionalism”’, *Irish Studies Review*, 7 (1999), 173–81 (p. 174) <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09670889908455632>>.

## History of the Anti-Emigration Debate

The Catholic Church's position with regard to peasant emigration was an ambivalent one: as Oliver MacDonagh notes, the Church itself never issued an official opinion, and '[p]riests and bishops, when they spoke of emigration, usually spoke as individuals, not as members of their order.'<sup>35</sup> As a socioeconomic phenomenon, however, the impact of emigration could not be denied: on the one hand, what Emmet Larkin referred to as the devotional revolution of the mid-nineteenth century required the financial support and physical presence of parishioners in order to increase the Church's size and status;<sup>36</sup> on the other hand, the Church also recognized the missionary benefit of those same parishioners and the substantial financial support sent over from the United States. Canon Sheehan was quoted in 1882 as saying, 'Well, God's will be done! God knoweth best! We cheerfully made the sacrifice, and behold our reward! The exiles have prospered. The 3,000,000 have grown to 10,000,000'.<sup>37</sup> Fitzpatrick notes that, though the Catholic Church was a frequent source of assistance to individuals emigrating early in the century, it viewed emigration as carrying 'the promise of spreading the gospel in the New World' while simultaneously carrying 'the threat that the faith would perish in cities of sin.'<sup>38</sup> Roddy echoes this assertion, noting in her study of nineteenth-century Catholic emigration guidebooks the 'obvious contradiction inherent in guides [...] whose prefaces tell the reader *not* to emigrate [and stress that] only certain classes could

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<sup>35</sup> Oliver MacDonagh, 'The Irish Catholic Clergy and Emigration during the Great Famine', *Irish Historical Studies*, 5 (1947), 287–302 (p. 287).

<sup>36</sup> Emmet Larkin, 'Economic Growth, Capital Investment, and the Roman Catholic Church in Nineteenth-Century Ireland', *The American Historical Review*, 72 (1967), 852–84.

<sup>37</sup> Quoted in Fitzpatrick, *Irish Emigration 1801-1921*, p. 17.

<sup>38</sup> Fitzpatrick, 'Emigration, 1801-70', p. 598.

thrive'.<sup>39</sup> Correspondingly, the guides 'reserved their strictest warnings for the "unsteady" others who they felt would do better to stay at home.' Those "'unsteady" others', Roddy notes, include 'single females who have not been in domestic service'—ironically a stratum of society most likely to emigrate in search of employment abroad.<sup>40</sup> Thus, the idea of women's physical and spiritual danger would mark ecclesiastical and nationalist discussions of emigration from the post-Famine era.

MacDonagh asserts that it was in 1850 that the Church, through the *Freeman's Journal*, began to appeal directly to the St Vincent de Paul Society to guard young emigrant women 'from the pitfalls laid everywhere in their path', suggesting that, after the Famine, the Church began actively publicising the message that emigration was spiritually and physically detrimental to young women.<sup>41</sup> It is perhaps not coincidental that this was the era when young women began to emigrate alone rather than in family groups, being for the first time away from the watchful eye of both community and clergy. Another complicating factor and 'push factor'<sup>42</sup> enticing young women to leave was the rise of post-Famine codes of sexual morality placed on young women by the Church, 'with its emphases on women's purity and self-sacrifice—as an engine of female subordination.'<sup>43</sup> While Angela Bourke and Caitríona Clear have argued that the increased emphasis on women's unpaid domestic work actually worked in their favour,

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<sup>39</sup> Roddy, "'The Emigrants' Friend"? Guides for Irish Emigrants by Clergymen, C. 1830-82', p. 251.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> *Freeman's Journal*, 30 October 1850 as quoted in MacDonagh, p. 300.

<sup>42</sup> Harris, among many others, distinguishes 'push' factors (those circumstances which would necessitate emigration, like economic penury at home) from 'pull' factors (those circumstances which would promote emigration, like the prospect of greater earning opportunities abroad). Ruth-Ann M. Harris, "'Come You All Courageously": Irish Women in America Write Home', *Éire-Ireland*, 36 (2001), 166–84.

<sup>43</sup> Miller, iv, p. 50.

allowing them increased status within the home, it cannot be overlooked that for young unmarried women, a variety of socioeconomic factors served to draw women abroad.<sup>44</sup> Among these factors, in addition to a dearth of economic and social options, were the Victorian codes of morality accompanying the rise of the middle-class, including restrictions on dancing and music,<sup>45</sup> denunciations from the pulpit,<sup>46</sup> and an overall emphasis on self-effacement for one's family and community—as Valiulis puts it, that '[t]rue Irish women' should be 'demure and deferential'.<sup>47</sup>

Nationalists were, at least initially, also ambivalent regarding women's emigration, actually supporting the state-offered assistance to families early in the nineteenth century. As Fitzpatrick points out however, from the Famine onwards, 'nationalist rhetoric hardened against encouragement of emigration, which was now firmly linked with "clearances" and "extermination."'”<sup>48</sup> Miller notes that emigration connoted depopulation in an era when 'the issue of Irish population had been charged with politics and emotion', the emphasis—particularly placed on young women—became the importance that they remain on the land for both cultural and reproductive

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<sup>44</sup> Joanna Bourke, *Husbandry to Housewifery : Women, Economic Change, and Housework in Ireland, 1890-1914* (Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1993); Caitríona Clear, *Women of the House: Women's Household Work in Ireland, 1926-1961 : Discourses, Experiences, Memories* (Dublin; Portland, OR: Irish Academic Press, 2000).

<sup>45</sup> Tom Inglis, 'Origins and Legacies of Irish Prudery: Sexuality and Social Control in Modern Ireland', *Éire-Ireland*, 40 (2005), 9–37 (p. 22).

<sup>46</sup> Cara Delay, 'Confidantes or Competitors? Women, Priests, and Conflict in Post-Famine Ireland', *Éire-Ireland*, 40 (2005), 107–25; Tom Inglis, *Moral Monopoly : The Catholic Church in Modern Irish Society* (Dublin; New York: Gill and Macmillan; St. Martin's Press, 1987), p. 42.

<sup>47</sup> Maryann Valiulis, 'Neither Feminist nor Flapper: The Ecclesiastical Construction of the Ideal Irish Woman', in *Chattel, Servant or Citizen: Women's Status in Church, State and Society*, ed. by Mary O'Dowd and Sabine Wichert (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, The Queen's University of Belfast, 1995), pp. 168–86 (p. 175).

<sup>48</sup> Fitzpatrick, *Irish Emigration 1801-1921*, p. 16.

reasons.<sup>49</sup> MacPherson notes that a column in June 1898's the *Irish Homestead* (the vehicle for George Russell and Horace Plunkett's Irish Agricultural Organisation Society, a publication aimed specifically at a readership of rural housewives) sought to 'retain the people as much as possible on the land, and prevent them from [...] leaving the country', replacing, for the first time, tips on fashion and housekeeping with an anti-emigration discourse directed at women.<sup>50</sup> Although many nationalist politicians and activists would travel to the United States in order to procure the funds needed to sustain the fight for independence—itsself a recognition of the social and economic power of the Irish emigrant population,<sup>51</sup> Charles Stewart Parnell would nonetheless famously quip that state-funded efforts would 'leave us none but the old men and the old women [and] that would be one way of dealing with the Irish question, certainly.'<sup>52</sup> Thus, despite emigration's obvious economic advantages, nationalists were obligated for political reasons to emphasise the domestic responsibilities of potential emigrants—women in particular—in what they perceived was a time of national emergency.

### **Emigration and the popular press**

Edwards and Storey note that 'the final abolition of [...] the advertisement tax in 1853 and the stamp duty in 1855 meant that daily publication became feasible in England outside London.'<sup>53</sup> The ensuing economic expansion of affordable print media,

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<sup>49</sup> Miller, 'Emigration, Ideology, and Identity in Post-Famine Ireland', p. 521.

<sup>50</sup> MacPherson, p. 135.

<sup>51</sup> Michael Davitt in 1878 in support of the Land League, Charles Stewart Parnell in 1880 in support of the Irish Parliamentary Party, Patrick Pearce in 1914 in support of Clan na Gael, among countless others.

<sup>52</sup> Fitzpatrick, *Irish Emigration 1801-1921*, p. 16.

<sup>53</sup> Owen Dudley Edwards and Patricia J. Storey, 'The Irish Press in Victorian Britain', in *The Irish in the Victorian City*, ed. by Roger Swift (London; Dover, NH: Croom Helm, 1985), pp. 158–78 (p. 158).

combined with technological advances and increased literacy rates<sup>54</sup> toward the end of the nineteenth century drove the rise of small and regional popular newspapers and magazines in Ireland as well as in England, many of which were of a didactic or expressly political nature. Hennessy notes the awareness of the proprietors of the pro-Parnellite newspapers '*The Freeman's Journal*, *The Nation*, [and] *United Ireland*,' of the country's 'large and increasing' reading public.<sup>55</sup> While the regular purchase of reading materials was frequently beyond the reach of the peasantry and working-class audiences, Land League and National League reading rooms in rural parishes and Catholic Young Men's Societies in towns made materials (usually of a Catholic and/or nationalist nature) available, reaching and influencing the rising middle class.<sup>56</sup>

While many of Ireland's new popular newspapers and magazines were of a pious or political nature, some were more literary, though still featuring themes which emphasised the Irish identity propounded by nationalist politicians. Richard Pigott's illustrated weekly *Shamrock* (1866-1919), for example, was mainly literary in nature (publishing Katharine Tynan, among others) but was purchased by the Irish National Newspaper and Publishing Company (owned, not unimportantly, by the Land League) in 1881.<sup>57</sup> The Jesuit-produced *Irish Monthly* (1873-1954)—a magazine featured prominently throughout this study—was, from its inception, primarily a vehicle for new

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<sup>54</sup> Hugh O' Neill, 'Census Data in Relation to Literacy', 14 March 2014 <Personal Correspondence> <[http://www.histpop.org/ohpr/servlet/PageBrowser?path=Browse/Census%20\(by%20date\)/1901/Ireland&active=yes&mno=452&tocstate=expandnew&display=sections&display=tables&display=pagetitles&page seq=75&zoom=5](http://www.histpop.org/ohpr/servlet/PageBrowser?path=Browse/Census%20(by%20date)/1901/Ireland&active=yes&mno=452&tocstate=expandnew&display=sections&display=tables&display=pagetitles&page seq=75&zoom=5)>.

<sup>55</sup> Pope Hennessy, 'What Do The Irish Read?', *The Nineteenth Century*, 88 (1884), 920–32 (p. 932).

<sup>56</sup> Marie-Louise Legg, *Newspapers and Nationalism: The Irish Provincial Press, 1850-1892* (Dublin; Portland, OR: Four Courts Press, 1999).

<sup>57</sup> Laurel Brake, Marysa Demoor and British Library, *Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Journalism in Great Britain and Ireland* (Gent; London: Academia Press; British Library, 2009), p. 569.



literary talent, publishing early work by Oscar Wilde, W.B. Yeats, M. E. Francis, Katharine Tynan, Hilaire Belloc, and Rosa Mulholland, among many others. Much of the fiction featured within its pages was of an openly religious and nationalist tenor, however, and the journal's content became increasingly conservative after its founder and editor, Father Matthew Russell, passed away in 1912. The *Irish Monthly*, both before and after Russell's death, is representative of the conventionalism of the time and the general attitude toward women's ideal place being in the home; this ethos is reflected almost categorically in the journals under discussion in this study, underscoring the idea that periodicals available to both the masses and the middle classes shared a common attitude towards peasant women's domestic responsibility—a position gainsaid by the significant outflow of young single females.

### **Catholic women's writing and emigration**

The scope of this project, and the number of works that fall within it, is intended to constitute a sample of anti-emigration writing and is not inclusive. My intent with this study, then, is to present works by popular women authors who employ patterns of story and stylistic strategies in both romance<sup>58</sup> and realist<sup>59</sup> modes in order to send an anti-emigration message to a specific readership (though both the message and readership vary according to the author and their specific political stance) within a specific time frame—roughly 1885 (the height of Parnell's Home Rule movement) to

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<sup>58</sup> 'Romance' here is intended to indicate a literary genre whose novels focus primarily on the courtship and eventual marriage of the main protagonists.

<sup>59</sup> 'Realist' here is intended to indicate a literary convention expressed through novels which, while often still conforming to the traditional patterns of romance narrative, privilege a representation of 'real' contemporary life.

1919 (the beginning of the War of Independence). Due to these parameters, I have been obliged to exclude a wide variety of writers who fall outside this remit, though their works have also made significant statements about emigration. Annie Smithson (1873-1948), for example, was a converted Catholic and member of Cumann na mBan whose journalism and popular novels employed a highly religious tone to sing the praises of nationalist duty. As the vast majority of her novels were published after Independence, however, they tend to respond to a very different socio-political context. Bestselling authors like Katherine Cecil Thurston (1875-1911) and Kathleen Coyle (1886-1952) both construct proto-feminist heroines whose peripatetic choices complicate other, more traditional contemporary writings about women's relation and duty to land; however, both authors' depictions of emigration feature locales predominantly outside of Ireland, which would alter the focus of this study. Kate O'Brien (1897-1974) represents an interesting coda to this study, but the majority of her work, while specifically addressing both emigration and the social restrictions imposed on women by the Catholic Church, again responds to different historical conditions. The paucity of research done on women writers of the period and the lack of preservation of their work has rendered the task of finding more representative samples a difficult one: in some instances the specific work sought is simply no longer in existence, as is the case with Geraldine Cummins' play *A Broken Faith*, produced by the Abbey Theatre in 1913, which was pointedly praised by Yeats for its 'strength and directness'.<sup>60</sup> Works like these, many of

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<sup>60</sup> Maria Luddy, 'Cummins, Geraldine Dorothy', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (online edition: Oxford University Press, 2004) <<http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.pugwash.lib.warwick.ac.uk/view/article/58637>> [accessed 13 March 2014].

which were at the time both popular and politically *outré*, merit the time and effort of both Irish Studies and feminist scholars.

This study is intended not as a survey of all Irish women authors with something to say about emigration, then, but instead a study of the ways in which a representative sample of some of the most influential and popular Catholic authors employ literature as a means to represent and debate issues of emigration. The writers whose works are discussed in this study—Mary Butler, Katharine Tynan, Rosa Mulholland, and Geraldine Cummins—have been chosen not merely because they appeared frequently within the pages of popular magazines aimed at primarily upper-middle class audiences, but because they are Catholic women writers (like Nolan, I will use the term Catholic ‘in primarily a sociological and political sense rather than in a denominational one’; this distinction I make in the case of Cummins, who was raised Protestant)<sup>61</sup> who draw inspiration from the Catholic nationalist position and discourse on emigration, as revealed through their choice of subject matter and the stylistic devices they employ in the depiction of their emigrant characters. Far from being homogenous as a group, one author emerges from what could be referred to as a Catholic gentry background while the other three are upper middle class.<sup>62</sup> Though all four stress the central importance

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<sup>61</sup> Emer Nolan, *Catholic Emancipations: Irish Fiction from Thomas Moore to James Joyce* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2007), p. xii; When writing about her personal history, Cummins stresses that ‘I am wholly Celtic, that is to say I am descended from Irish people with a slight blend of a very occasional Norman or English ancestor; but not one Cromwellian settler in Ireland figures in my racial past.’ Although Cummins was raised Protestant, the tone with which she treats her background echoes remarkably the nationalist discourse that equated noble Celtic origins with Irishness. Geraldine Cummins, *Swan on a Black Sea: A Study in Automatic Writing* (Guildford: White Crow Books, 2013), p. 28.

<sup>62</sup> Murphy notes that ‘members of the Catholic gentry retained their Big Houses and sense of social superiority’ whereas the Catholic middle class ‘aimed at success in professions such as law and medicine.’ James Murphy, *Catholic Fiction and Social Reality in Ireland*, p. 7.

of domesticity (though in radically different ways), only one of the authors under discussion had children. Though relatively the same age and writing within roughly the same historical context and under similar literary and cultural influences, these authors' differing political stances tend to influence both their style and their treatment of the subject of the woman emigrant. These varying representations are reflected in the degree of sympathy with which the emigrant is depicted and the ways in which she relates to themes of responsibility and duty to family and community.

Unlike hard-line nationalist or Catholic anti-emigration propaganda, however, the writers discussed here recognise to varying degrees the realities faced by peasant women and the exigencies that might make emigration not only an attractive option but the only one. These realities inevitably emerge in their writing which complicates their anti-emigration discourse, endowing their writing, perhaps in spite of themselves, with a certain level of resistance to categorical prohibitions on women's emigration on the basis of domestic responsibility. Instead, the majority of the narratives here set out the individual emigrant's experience (from her point of view or framed by an outsider's gaze; as told in middle-class and peasant narratives), and each author's experience and viewpoint of peasant women's position within rural society endows her with a certain measure of sympathy not found in propaganda emerging from more overtly religious or political sources.

While Butler is more invested in the political aspect of emigration, Mulholland views emigration as a subject for the social problem novel; Tynan tends to focus on the

personal and psychological cost of emigration, as well as the emigrant's own ambivalence in the face of duty, suggesting that her own experience of emigration may have contributed to her treatment of the topic. Cummins returns to a more politically motivated discussion of emigration, though told in a style which is far more sympathetic to the peasant protagonist female, indicating at once a return to discussions of nationalist duty but reflecting differences both in socio-historical context and in the author's perspective. Despite their political and literary differences however, all the authors under discussion here treat, to varying degrees, the difficulties faced by women in *fin-de-siècle* Ireland and show how the phenomenon of emigration affects them and the community they leave.

It is perhaps somewhat ironic that the author who most approaches what might be thought of as 'gentry' status is the author of the most bluntly political works under study here. Mary Ellen Lambert Butler (1872-1920) was the youngest of three children born to a Catholic landowning family in County Clare;<sup>63</sup> despite her family's Protestant Unionist ties through marriage (her cousin, Edward Carson MP, was an avid campaigner against Home Rule and founder of the Ulster Volunteers), Butler was a member of the *Inghinidhe na hÉireann* and an executive of the Gaelic League. Her work as a noted Dublin philanthropist—she helped to establish a residence for Catholic girls in Parnell Square called St. Kevin's House—as well as her formative experiences in rural Clare may well have informed her views about the lives of Irish peasant women and contributed to

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<sup>63</sup> Both the *DIB* and Biletz refer to her as upbringing as traditionally 'gentry'. *Dictionary of Irish Biography: From the Earliest Times to the Year 2002*, ed. by James McGuire and James Quinn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: Royal Irish Academy, 2009), p. 160; Frank Biletz, 'Women and Irish-Ireland: The Domestic Nationalism of Mary Butler', *New Hibernia Review*, 6 (2002), 59–72 (p. 65).

her interest in writing about their emigration.<sup>64</sup> Butler's investment in anti-emigrationism was rooted in the more radical political arm of the Irish Cultural Revival, viewing the retention of the peasantry (particularly peasant women) as a primary necessity in the fight for Independence. Perhaps best remembered as the woman who suggested the name Sinn Féin to her close friend and fellow nationalist Arthur Griffith, Butler wrote regularly for a variety of nationalist newspapers and journals in Ireland, contributing to Griffith's *United Irishman* (where she wrote frequently under the name Máire de Buitléir) and the *Weekly Independent* under the pen name Sean Mathair.<sup>65</sup> She also wrote a variety of pamphlets for organisations ranging from the Gaelic League to the Irish Messenger and on topics like women's domestic cultural responsibilities within the home<sup>66</sup> to the ethics of women's fashion.<sup>67</sup> Her fictional works include a volume of short stories entitled *A Bundle of Rushes* (1900), whose mythological and pastoral themes echo works by other Literary Revival authors; and a novel, *The Ring of Day* (1907), which was serialised in the *Irish Peasant* in 1906. While her publications address a wide variety of subjects, the tenor of her works maintains an intensity with regard to Catholic and nationalist political interests: Butler's ideological position, which extends throughout the vast majority of her work, falls directly in line with Catholic nationalist discourse at the time regarding the central importance for women in the domestic

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<sup>64</sup> 'The Life of Mary E. L. Butler' (Dublin), p. 15, MS 7321, National Library of Ireland.

<sup>65</sup> Arthur Griffith states that it was 'she who suggested the name "Sinn Féin" to me, one day at the end of 1904. Her name will be ever linked with its history.' Arthur Griffith, 'An Autograph Letter from Arthur Griffith in Mountjoy Jail to Madam Columba Butler, O.S.B., in France, on the Death of Her Sister Mary (Mrs. T. O'Nolan) in Which He Credits Her with Naming the Movement "Sinn Féin"', 12 May 1921, Ms. 4577, National Library of Ireland.

<sup>66</sup> Mary E.L. Butler, *Irishwomen and the Home Language* (Dublin: Gaelic League Pamphlet 6, n.d.).

<sup>67</sup> Mary E.L. Butler, *Modern Fashions in Ladies' Dress* (Dublin: The Irish Messenger, 1927).

sphere. 'The altar and the hearth,' she insisted were 'the two most sacred spots on earth'.<sup>68</sup> The *Southern Star's* obituary of Butler noted her mission to make 'every home into an Irish citadel'.<sup>69</sup> Butler herself was stringently opposed to the idea of women occupying public and political arenas (despite her own participation as a journalist), urging women to 'shrink from mingling in the melee, and retiring into the inner courtyard' rather than going forth as 'shrieking viragos of aggressive amazons.'<sup>70</sup> For Butler, the key to stemming emigration lay not merely in 'the stimulation of industrial activity, the stimulation of intellectual activity, [and] the stimulation of the social sphere' (which lay in the domain of nationalists and Catholic and middle-class philanthropists), but most importantly in 'the rekindling of family feeling and devotion to home',<sup>71</sup> the responsibility for which lay, politically and culturally, at the feet of peasant women. This ideology permeates Butler's fiction, where she seeks to persuade her primarily middle-class readership to set a moral and ideological example for their tenantry.

While relatively little research has been done into the life and works of Katharine Tynan (1861-1931), those who seek it are aided by her several volumes of published memoirs and by her unpublished correspondence and personal diary, which are to be found in a few major repositories in England and Ireland, as well minor collections

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<sup>68</sup> Mary E.L. Butler, 'Our Irish Homes', *the Southern Star*, 8 December 1906, pp. 3–4 (p. 3).

<sup>69</sup> 'Ring of Day (Review)', *the Southern Star*, 25 October 1920, p. 6.

<sup>70</sup> Mary E.L. Butler, 'Irishwomen and the Home Language', *All Ireland Review*, 15 December 1900, 6.

<sup>71</sup> Mary E.L. Butler, 'Womanhood and Nationhood III', *the United Irishman*, 17 January 1903, pp. 6–7 (p. 6).

scattered across the United States.<sup>72</sup> The daughter of an upwardly-mobile Clondalkin, county Dublin farmer, Andrew Cullin Tynan, Tynan is known most famously for her relationship with W.B. Yeats and as a formative influence within the Literary Revival.<sup>73</sup> A highly prolific writer, Tynan was obligated to support her family through her literary output and penned at least 100 novels and thirteen volumes of short stories, in addition to poetry, memoirs, and countless articles for a wide variety of popular Irish, English, and American magazines and newspapers throughout a career which spanned fifty-three years. Intensely political in her early years (she was an early member of the Ladies Land League and a devoted supporter of Parnell), her feelings toward Ireland changed over the eighteen years she spent in England, and her ambivalence to Irish politics is reflected in her later novels as well as in her memoirs. She did, however—in much the same way as her close friend Rosa Mulholland—retain an interest in women's issues, publishing fiction and essays 'for women like herself'<sup>74</sup> which addressed themes of temperance, working conditions for women, and rural poverty, in addition to more traditional upper-middle class romances. Her writing on women's emigration, correspondingly, tends to be depicted more frequently as a social issue affecting the individual than a political one affecting the country. Peasant emigration is addressed

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<sup>72</sup> Major repositories include the John Rylands Library at the University of Manchester, University College, Dublin, the Irish National Archives, and the Jesuit Archives, Dublin. Minor collections can be found at Southern Illinois University Carbondale; Holy Cross College in Worcester, Massachusetts, the University of Texas at Austin, as well as private collections.

<sup>73</sup> The Literary Revival (also known as the Literary Renaissance or Celtic Twilight) was a literary movement that began in the late nineteenth century as the Irish Literary Society. It featured such personages as Yeats, George Russell, and Douglas Hyde, and eventually launched the Irish National Theatre Society and the culturally influential Abbey Theatre in 1904.

<sup>74</sup> Marilyn Gaddis Rose, *Katharine Tynan*, The Irish Writers Series (Lewisburg PA: Bucknell University Press, 1974), p. 80.



with a far greater prevalence at the beginning of her writing career, very possibly indicating her own feelings of displacement as a sort of young émigrée herself. A dedicated Catholic throughout her lifetime, her treatment of the female emigrant character, like Butler, is aligned with the Catholic Church's philosophy of women's domestic responsibility, but Tynan tends to focus on the individual cost of emigration and its psychological effects rather than the larger community view taken by other writers under study here. Instead, her fiction offers an ambiguity of tone, complicating the picture of the dutiful Irish peasant through often poignant and troubling depictions of the difficulties facing more fully-fleshed out women characters.

Rosa Mulholland (1841-1921) was once described as 'if not the greatest living Irish novelist, [...] the best known Irish writer of the present day.'<sup>75</sup> Though virtually forgotten today, Mulholland was both a prolific and influential writer, publishing over forty volumes of fiction, as well as short stories, drama, poetry, and essays in a career that spanned fifty years. Although Mulholland criticised authors who abandoned an Irish market to publish with London editors who had access to a larger (and more profitable) readership,<sup>76</sup> her popularity like Tynan's, exceeded Ireland's shores, reaching audiences not only in England and Ireland, but also the United States where reprints of her novels were made available to a large expatriate audience. The daughter of Belfast doctor, Joseph Stevenson Mulholland, she was educated at home and lived in both Northern Ireland and county Galway before marrying John Thomas Gilbert (later knighted) in 1891

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<sup>75</sup> Rosa Mulholland, 'Wanted An Irish Novelist', the *Irish Monthly*, July 1891, 368–73 (p. 372).

<sup>76</sup> Tynan asserts that 'writers who produce one good Irish novel, giving promise of store to come, almost invariably cease to be Irish at this point, and afterwards cast the tributary stream of their powers into the universal river of English fiction.' Ibid, p. 369.

and settling in county Dublin. Mulholland was a devout Catholic, which is reflected in much of her work, and, with her close friend Father Matthew Russell, helped to found the Jesuit magazine the *Irish Monthly*. Highly influential in Catholic upper middle-class and literary circles (Katharine Tynan states in her memoirs that it was Mulholland who initially encouraged her to write fiction, and it was due to his association with Mulholland that Yeats' early work was published in the *Irish Monthly*),<sup>77</sup> Mulholland was a well-connected philanthropist and political activist, most likely moving in the same social (if not political) circles as Mary Butler.<sup>78</sup> While Murphy is correct in asserting that 'upper-middle class fiction rarely touches on the question of Irish nationalism in any direct way,'<sup>79</sup> he specifically points to Mulholland as an exception, much of her work addressing both political and social concerns. The subject of peasant women's emigration appears frequently in her peasant and middle-class novels as both a social problem facing the peasantry and a sign of larger national ills in the late nineteenth century. Her class status and her late-Victorian style dictate an authorial distance from the issues at hand, and unlike Tynan, Mulholland, while sensitive to those issues, writes as an outside observer, always with a tone that keeps readers at one remove from the peasant protagonist. Despite her anti-emigration stance, however, Mulholland remained sensitive to the complications of emigration as a potential solution to Ireland's

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<sup>77</sup> Katharine Tynan, *Twenty-Five Years: Reminiscences* (New York: Devin-Adair, 1913), p. 317.

<sup>78</sup> For more detailed information regarding Mulholland's familiarity with philanthropy in Ireland, see: Rosa Mulholland, 'On Philanthropic Work of Women in Ireland', in *Woman's mission; a series of congress papers on the philanthropic work of women, by eminent writers*, ed. by Angela Burdett-Coutts (New York; London: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1893), pp. 228–47  
<<https://ia600301.us.archive.org/2/items/womansmissionser00burdiala/womansmissionser00burdiala.pdf>> [accessed 21 February 2014].

<sup>79</sup> James Murphy, *Catholic Fiction and Social Reality in Ireland*, p. 47.

limited social and economic opportunities for rural women, and her narratives frequently reveal the tensions between what Mulholland believed as a Catholic nationalist and what she understood from her experience as a philanthropist and feminist.

Geraldine Dorothy Cummins (1890-1969) was the fifth of eleven children born to Cork city physician and University College Cork Professor of Medicine Dr William E. Ashley Cummins and his wife, Jane Constable (*née* Hall). Privately educated, Cummins' early ambition was to follow her father's career path and become a physician; her mother adamantly discouraged her, however, which led her to take 'the elusive pursuit of literature and to work for Votes for Women.'<sup>80</sup> Though an Anglo-Irish Protestant, Cummins was politically active for women's issues at an early age, founding—with Edith Somerville—the 'non-party, non-sectarian, and non-militant Munster Women's Franchise League'.<sup>81</sup> Also, as a member of the Irish Women's Suffrage Federation, she was a regular contributor to the suffrage weekly, the *Irish Citizen*. Unlike any of the other writers discussed in this study (and in direct contrast to Butler's rejection of 'shrieking viragos' and Tynan's belief that women's primary responsibility was to the family and within the domestic sphere), Cummins remained single, living much of her life with her patron, Edith Beatrice Gibbes. Although, like Tynan and Mulholland, her interest in women's issues waned toward the end of her career, in her younger years,

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<sup>80</sup> Cummins, *Swan on a Black Sea*, p. 148.

<sup>81</sup> McGuire and Quinn, p. 1086.

Cummins was an active and vocal participant with regard to women's rights, speaking at 'open-air rallies and MWFL meetings throughout the south-west of Ireland.'<sup>82</sup>

Importantly to this study, Cummins was also a journalist, dramatist, and writer of fiction and nonfiction, publishing short stories in such popular magazines (like Tynan) as *Pall Mall*, as well as reprints on both sides of the Atlantic. The bulk of her prolific output was written, she insisted, through occult dictation (she would publish twenty-two books—fifteen of which she claimed to have written through transmission); however, works authored early in her career bear the hallmarks of Revivalist writers in their focus on the peasant and on rural life. Although never considered a central member of the Literary Revival *per se*, she, along with fellow Corkwoman Susanne Rouvier Day, wrote three plays, two of which were produced by the Abbey Theatre: 'Broken Faith' in April 1913 and 'Fox and Geese' in February and December 1917. The pair also wrote 'The Way of the World', which was staged in their native Cork in 1914. Moving away from the Literary Revival both thematically and physically (she published much of her work while living in Paris and later in England), Cummins published two novels, *The Land They Loved* (1919), and *The Fires of Beltane* (1936)—both of which examine the limited opportunities available to peasant women in rural Ireland—and *Variety Show*, a volume of short stories which employs a lighter tone to depict more middle-class characters, in 1959. Although Cummins' work was less influenced by emigration as a primary theme, as a feminist and nationalist, emigration—and particularly emigration's effect on the peasant female protagonist—figures in both of the aforementioned novels. Her novel

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

*The Land They Loved* in many ways brings this study full circle, returning to a political discourse akin to Mary Butler's, though in a different political context (World War One rather than land war), a different style (realist rather than stylised), and a different focus. Here, the peasants take centre stage and the protagonist is endowed with a far greater agency; unlike Butler's encomia to an idyllic Ireland, Cummins registers the protagonist's disappointment with the rural Ireland to which she has returned, exposing the tensions between returnee expectation and reality.

These women were all broadly aligned with Catholic nationalist discourse in that the fiction under examination here supports—often with Catholic and nationalist language—the generally accepted ideology that women are better off at home than abroad, despite the overwhelming social and economic disadvantages of rural Ireland. In many cases these authors underscore the peasant women's responsibility and duty to the family and within the domestic sphere; the moral and physical dangers to which they are exposed outside of the confines of their community; and the risk of isolation and rejection from their home communities upon return. These discourses are frequently tempered, however, by the author's own personal understanding of the extenuating circumstances facing the peasant female—circumstances not taken into account by hard-line nationalists or Catholic clerics who opposed emigration.

### **The Study**

This study seeks to probe the ways in which Catholic authors employed the resources of literature such as narrative, rhetoric, and tone so as to propound an anti-emigration

message. Often at stake in their work is the issue of how far the female emigrant, in particular the peasant female, is to blame for the act of emigration, and indeed how far she has agency at all in relation to the events or conditions that lead to this event. Class is a dominant determinant of agency in the depiction of the emigrants' actions and decisions; the authors' own class is key, too, in determining the stance they take on these decisions. In all these treatments, a common theme is the construction of Ireland as 'Holy Ireland', a haven of moral safety and spiritual regeneration. Key to their treatment of the emigrant female is the difference in their political intent and the degree of realism with which the protagonist and her context are addressed. Aside from criticism and reviews of their work at the time of publication, and the authors' own records of their lives and works, very little information exists about the authors under discussion here; consequently, this study attempts to initiate a conversation about the authors and the ways their adaptation of Catholic nationalist discourse engaged and perhaps shaped emigration debates.

Chapter one, 'Emigration and the Catholic Church', is an introductory chapter that establishes a historical context for what follows, exploring the influential role of the Catholic Church within discussions of women's emigration and the ways in which religious language entered into mainstream anti-emigration propaganda and shaped its message. Chapter two, 'Departures and Destinations', explores the ways in which the theme of the voyage draws on patterns of story from anti-emigration literature of the period. Chapter three, 'The Nostos Narrative and Treatments of Return', examines the homecoming motif and the way in which the authors under discussion vary the

traditional return narrative so as to support an anti-emigration discourse. Chapter four, 'Courtship and the Romantic Emigrant', looks at the ways in which authors employed the standard elements of the romance plot in upper middle-class and peasant fiction, demonstrating how marriage is thwarted by emigration for both the middle-class and peasant protagonist, though in opposite ways. Chapter five, 'The Land and Soil', addresses the ways that the theme of land—both in the sense of an idealised space and in the sense of the actual economic or geographic space—is employed in both middle-class and peasant fiction. The conclusion re-examines the trajectory of this argument, looking not merely at the ways in which authors employed standard tropes and language from Catholic and nationalist writing to propound an anti-emigration message, but also discussing the tensions that arise between that message and the authors' appreciation—even in spite of themselves—of the women's plight and the economic and social pressure placed on them to emigrate.

## **Chapter One: Emigration and the Catholic Church**

This chapter examines the relationship between the rise of Catholic nationalism and the ways in which the use of religious language and representations of Catholicism, specifically in the trope of the priest character in fiction, shaped and conveyed an anti-emigration message. These strategies will be explored through both fiction and nonfiction in order to demonstrate the shared language and imagery in Catholic journalism and Catholic fiction as well as the ideological convergence of Catholic Church anti-emigration propaganda and works by Catholic authors. To do this, I will first explore the historical context for the Catholic Church's fight against rural emigration. I will then examine fiction by Mary Butler, Katharine Tynan, and Rosa Mulholland so as to point up the topical and stylistic influence of Catholic discourse on their work and their use of the language of clerical intervention. The Church also figures in the fictional world of these works, the priest character being regularly employed as moral guide for emigrating peasant women. Despite these authors' varying treatment of the Catholic Church and the priest figure in their works, their use of these strategies underscores their commitment to the Catholic anti-emigration effort and their adherence to the stylistic and social examples offered by the Church.

### **Historical context**

Though it was never categorically denounced by the Catholic hierarchy, the majority of Catholic organisations opposed women's emigration on two primary grounds: first, that it would exacerbate rural depopulation (and the high celibacy rates which purportedly



accompanied it)<sup>83</sup> and second, that the emigrating women would no longer benefit from the Church's spiritual influence, or 'policing', as Inglis terms it,<sup>84</sup> putting them at moral risk. Publications such as Father Russell's *Irish Monthly* and Arthur Griffith's *United Irishman* sought to depict emigrant women as, at turns, victims of British colonialism and of their own naïveté, underscoring the danger to which women exposed themselves by leaving the safety of their Catholic communities. For example, in his essay in the *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, Fr. M.F. Shinnors laments the loss of 'our beautiful Irish girls, true children of Mary Immaculate, pictures of sweetness, grace and innocence, hurrying away unconsciously to their ruin, both temporal and eternal!'<sup>85</sup> Organisations such as the Catholic Truth Society and the Anti-Emigration Society sought to expose 'the real evils of the exodus' through attempted prohibitions on emigration, thereby depriving young women of the choice to leave and ostensibly doing themselves moral or physical harm whilst away from Ireland.<sup>86</sup> While women had been emigrating in roughly equal numbers to their male counterparts from the years directly following the Famine, a convergence of factors combined to create a corpus of anti-emigration literature, a great deal of which focused on women.<sup>87</sup> These factors would include the rise in

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<sup>83</sup> Inglis asserts that 'because emigration among females was higher, permanent celibacy was more common among Irish males'. Inglis, *Moral Monopoly*, p. 174.

<sup>84</sup> Inglis, 'Origins and Legacies of Irish Prudery', p. 11.

<sup>85</sup> M.F. Shinnors, 'Ireland and America: Some Notes of a Mission Tour in the United States', *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, 1902, 114–26.

<sup>86</sup> Fitzpatrick, 'Emigration, 1871-1921', p. 630.

<sup>87</sup> Though it falls outside the scope of this study, one interesting aspect of the advent of Catholic emigration-related pamphleteering is the profusion of practical guides for young immigrant girls, 'both fictionalised and otherwise, [which] abounded in postfamine Irish America.' Eva Roa White, 'Emigration as Emancipation: Portrayals of the Immigrant Irish Girl in Nineteenth-Century Fiction', *New Hibernia Review*, 9 (2005), 95–108 (p. 102).

numbers of young emigrating women, the political rise of the Catholic Church,<sup>88</sup> and the growing availability of print materials—particularly newspapers and penny magazines<sup>89</sup>—to the lower classes, spurring the advent of Catholic magazines such as the *Irish Monthly*, founded in 1873; *Lyceum* in 1887, the *Irish Messenger of the Sacred Heart* in 1888, among others.

Michael Logue, who became Ireland's Cardinal in 1893, aimed to perpetuate and extend the reach of what Sheridan Gilley refers to as 'the Irish ecclesiastical empire'<sup>90</sup> which was created by Paul Cullen<sup>91</sup> in the nineteenth century and continued by William Walsh<sup>92</sup> into the twentieth. Logue, who served as president of the Anti-Emigration Society (formed in Dublin in 1903)<sup>93</sup> sought to use the influence of the Catholic Church to produce and disseminate anti-emigration materials, reaching those portions of the population who were most likely to emigrate: the rural peasantry. On April 15, 1902, a meeting of the Bishops of Ireland was held at University College, Dublin where Cardinal Logue issued a resolution aimed at dissemination to all Catholics. Published initially in the *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, its call—detailing the clergy's 'pressing duty to publicly discourage the ruinous outflow of our people from their own country'—would emphasise the necessity of creating and distributing anti-emigration propaganda among

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<sup>88</sup> Privilege cites the fall of Parnell as the impetus for the establishment of an 'apparatus for a new national movement by the Church'. John Privilege, *Michael Logue and the Catholic Church in Ireland, 1879-1925* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), p. 82.

<sup>89</sup> Tony Farmer, "'We Are Not, I Think, a Book-Reading People'"--Book-Reading and Publishing in Ireland 1890-1960', in *The Book in Ireland*, ed. by Jacqueline Genet and Sylvie Mikowski (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2008), pp. 123-34 (p. 127).

<sup>90</sup> Gilley, 'Roman Catholicism and the Irish in England', p. 149.

<sup>91</sup> Archbishop of Armagh and then Dublin between 1849 and 1878.

<sup>92</sup> Archbishop of Dublin 1885-1921.

<sup>93</sup> Michael Logue, 'Canadian Emigration: Letter from the Cardinal', *the Irish Catholic*, 14 November 1903, p. 1.

the Irish Catholic population.<sup>94</sup> Cardinal Logue's resolution was based on four central points: first, population depletion and the threat that emigration posed to their congregations, provoking 'feelings of deep anxiety for the fortunes of our race in their own country'.<sup>95</sup> Second, the assertion that, due to the efforts of the Congested Districts Board to break up large grazing tracks, there was actually more land available for individual tillage, thereby ostensibly negating the justification for widespread rural emigration. Third, the promotion of 'factories along the numerous rivers in Ireland' to spur local industry, thereby improving the economy.<sup>96</sup> Last, they underscored the individual's duty to purchase goods of Irish manufacture. The notice closes with an appeal to the clergy throughout the country to 'use their influence by emphasising these few practical points in their public addresses to their flock.'<sup>97</sup> Whereas anti-emigration propaganda published in the Catholic press for public consumption chiefly addressed the physical and spiritual dangers that lay in waiting for young rural emigrants, the above resolution (directed toward the clergy) clearly deals with a broader, more socioeconomically motivated issue, revealing that the financial and political aspects of rural exodus (and the ways that they affected the devotional revolution) were also a primary concern for the Church.

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<sup>94</sup> Michael Logue, 'Resolutions of the Standing Committee of the Irish Archbishops and Bishops on Emigration and Its Remedies', *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, 1902, 475–77 (p. 476).

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid*, p. 475.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid*, p. 476.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*.

Logue believed that 'a close relationship between politics and religion was not only desirable but essential.'<sup>98</sup> Therefore, despite regular discord between the Church and nationalist leaders, Logue continued to foster the 'clerical-nationalist alliance forged by William Walsh in the 1880s.'<sup>99</sup> The propaganda generated by the Catholic-nationalist associations headed by Logue and the upper echelons of the Church cast an eye toward both the economic and political ramifications of mass emigration at the turn of the century (the Logue-supported Catholic Truth Society of Ireland was founded at a meeting of the Maynooth Union in 1899).<sup>100</sup> As Gilley points out, after the Famine, 'the number of priests and nuns continued to rise through the second half of the nineteenth century while the population continued to fall through continuing emigration,'<sup>101</sup> thus potentially negatively impacting the Church's economic and political leverage in an unstable political environment. The nascence of a new generation of Catholic and Catholic-inspired periodicals (McCarthy notes the Catholic Truth Society's mission to be 'a specifically Irish body which provided affordable Catholic reading materials' through pamphlets),<sup>102</sup> and the concentrated effort to distribute them to the Catholic laity, demonstrates the importance that subjects like emigration held for the Catholic Church. The theme of anti-emigration, finally, served as a point of convergence between political and religious discourse: sidestepping actual socioeconomic issues affecting the

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<sup>98</sup> Privilege, p. 80.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Andrew McCarthy, 'Publishing for Catholic Ireland', in *the Oxford History of the Irish Book, Volume V: The Irish Book in English, 1891-2000*, ed. by Clare Hutton and Patrick Walsh (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 244–63 (p. 250).

<sup>101</sup> MacRaild notes that '[b]efore the Famine there had been one priest to every 3000 parishioners; by 1900, the ratio stood at one to 900.' Gilley, 'Roman Catholicism and the Irish in England', p. 151; Donald MacRaild, *Irish Immigrants in Modern Britain, 1750-1922* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), p. 80.

<sup>102</sup> McCarthy, p. 250.

peasantry, propaganda relied instead on evocative portraits of naïve young women requiring the guiding hand of the clergy.

Despite the previously noted necessity of female emigrants' remittances, a large portion of Catholic Church anti-emigration propaganda focused on young women travelling alone (Kelly, for instance, refers to 'isolated single wanderers and unwed exiles').<sup>103</sup> The image of the unaccompanied emigrant woman would be indicative of historical trends: though pre-Famine emigration is largely believed to have been a family-led decision, post-Famine was far more frequently an individual one.<sup>104</sup> Unlike other European emigrants who migrated in families (Italians, Jews)<sup>105</sup> or the majority of whom were young males (Greeks, Croats),<sup>106</sup> Jackson notes that 'the proportion of women among [Irish] emigrants rose steadily until women were outnumbering men in the decades of the turn of the century'.<sup>107</sup> As a greater percentage of women emigrated post-Famine, this new phenomenon of female emigration was depicted as less a duty (as men were frequently portrayed as breadwinners) than a whim or a weakness (as women were ostensibly more 'attracted by some bright vision beyond the Atlantic')<sup>108</sup> despite the fact that young women were increasingly raised to leave by parents who recognised their superfluity on rural farms.<sup>109</sup> Furthermore, while the myth of the male

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<sup>103</sup> Richard J. Kelly, 'Emigration and Its Consequences', *the New Ireland Review*, XXI (1904), 257–67 (p. 263).

<sup>104</sup> Miller, iv, p. 47.

<sup>105</sup> Diner, p. 83.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid*, p. 31.

<sup>107</sup> P. Jackson, 'Women in 19th Century Irish Emigration', *International Migration Review*, 18 (1984), 1004–20 (p. 1006).

<sup>108</sup> Logue, 'Resolutions'.

<sup>109</sup> Inglis notes that 'mothers raised many of their children, especially daughters, in the expectation that they would emigrate'. Inglis, *Moral Monopoly*, p. 174.

emigrant tends to feature his financial success abroad (frequently depicted in returnee narratives—a subject to which we will return), a female emigrant was more likely to be depicted as isolated and physically and morally endangered. For example, *The Anglo-Celt* cites the Reverend Roughan who recounted from the pulpit ‘several cases where Irish girls were trapped the moment they left the steamer, and [were] never heard of again’.<sup>110</sup> Thus, despite the fact that women abroad proved indispensable to the communities they left behind,<sup>111</sup> the ecclesiastical discourses around their emigration centred most frequently on the responsibilities that ostensibly accompany their gender, in terms of either how they would affect the community they left behind, depopulation and cultural loss, or in terms of their own spiritual or moral danger. In both cases, the theme of peasant women’s emigration served to reinforce the idea of the necessity of clerical intervention.

The authors to be discussed in this chapter, Mary Butler, Katharine Tynan, and Rosa Mulholland, were all affiliated with Catholic anti-emigration organisations and were published, at least early in their careers,<sup>112</sup> under the auspices of such organisations. All of these authors published in T.A. Finlay’s *New Ireland Review*, Paul Cullen’s *The Irish Messenger*, Gaelic League pamphlets, Catholic Truth Society pamphlets, along with many others. Although their individual views and literary

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<sup>110</sup> ‘Irish Girls Warned’, *Anglo-Celt*, 31 March 1917, p. 1.

<sup>111</sup> Diner cites their ‘staggering contribution to the Irish economy in the form of remittances’. Diner, p. 52.

<sup>112</sup> Whitney Standlee asserts that Tynan’s career as a Catholic author was damaged by her support of Parnell in the O’Shea affair, almost certainly affecting her publishing choices after Parnell’s death. She notes a letter from Tynan to her friend Mary Gill from 1891 stating that Father Matthew Russell (the editor of the *Irish Monthly*) ‘couldn’t do anything for my poems [...] in the *Irish Monthly* because of the part I’d taken in politics.’ Whitney Standlee, ‘Erin’s “Revolting Daughters” and Britannia: The Fiction of Diasporic Irish Women in Britain, 1890-1916’ (unpublished thesis), The University of Liverpool, 2011), p. 246.

treatment of peasant emigrant women differ from one another along a variety of religious and political lines, the fact that all of these women published significant bodies of work with the aforementioned organisations—and that their work frequently echoed the rhetoric of Church pamphlets, sharing many of the stylistic and topical strategies—underscores their commitment to the anti-emigration ideology propounded by the Catholic Church. The inclusion of the motif of the priest as moral guide serves as the most direct way that ecclesiastical discourse enters into fiction. As we will see, each author in her own way emphasises the central role of the clergy, and specifically the parish priest, who, in many cases, along with the middle-class protagonist, succeeds in exerting great influence over the individual lives of peasant women. That the parish priest is often featured in league with a philanthropically-minded middle-class protagonist further links the Church's role in the anti-emigration debate to these authors' belief in the responsibility of their middle-class readership to aid in the fight. These literary depictions prove essential to the larger debate surrounding women's emigration and the increasingly pervasive role of the Catholic Church as moral compass for peasant women.

### **Mary Butler**

Distinctive though she was in her quasi-religious zeal for nationalist politics, Butler remained solidly both Catholic and gentry,<sup>113</sup> which inevitably informed the way in which she viewed the Catholic gentry's (and upper middle-class's) role with regard to the issue

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<sup>113</sup> Grehan attests to long-standing political and economic power of the Butler clan; O'Brien notes in the *DIB* the family's strong loyalty to the crown. Ida Grehan, *Irish Family Histories* (Boulder, CO: Roberts Rinehart, 1993); McGuire and Quinn, p. 160.

of peasant emigration. As the Protestant Ascendancy's political and economic influence in Ireland became increasingly uncertain toward the end of the nineteenth century, Catholic gentry writers like Butler continued to believe in the importance of the upper classes and the clergy as guiding political and moral forces for the peasantry. Both the subject matter and tone of her 1906 novel *The Ring of Day*<sup>114</sup> reflect this ideology. Employing both religious language and the priest figure, the novel deals centrally with the responsibility of upper middle-class women who are charged here—with the aid of the clergy—to stanch the flow of peasant emigration. Ostensibly set during the land wars,<sup>115</sup> Butler's novel never unbinds Catholicism and nationalism: her references to the nationalist struggle and to the Irish peasantry as 'the chosen people' consistently construct nationalism as a Catholic enterprise and equate religious with nationalist zeal (*RD* 260). Told through Butler's semi-autobiographical protagonist, Beatrice Burke, the story deals primarily with nationalist politics and the romance between members of different classes rather than with emigration *per se*; however, the fairly straightforward romance narrative regularly links nationalism and religion with emigration and its antithesis, a 'self-sacrificing idealism' (*RD* 128). The novel's preface is addressed to 'Patriots, religious souls, or any others who devote their lives to realising an ideal', acknowledging that they 'sacrifice present pleasures for the attainment of a future good' (*RD* 5-6). This language—frequently tied to both nationalist and religious

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<sup>114</sup> Published previously in a serialised version in W.P. Ryan's short-lived journal *The Peasant*. Dictionary of Irish Biography, McGuire and Quinn, p. 159. Note that the editors erroneously state that *Ring of Day* was first published in novel form in 1907.

<sup>115</sup> Butler gives very few indicators as to the date of the narrative, but in one instance George Eyre mentions purchasing a 'new Manet', suggesting that the novel is set within the last twenty years of the nineteenth century. Mary E.L. Butler, *the Ring of Day* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1906), p. 196. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text as *RD*.



doctrine—establishes the novel's tone with regard to individual sacrifice for a common cause. The novel's engagement with the subject of emigration maintains a rhetorical distance from the plot's principal conflict and is thus treated rather superficially; it remains connected to the peasantry who are reduced to caricatured huddling, though noble, masses. Although Butler, through Beatrice, insists that '[e]verything that concerns the country concerns all classes equally,' the moral and spiritual critique of emigration concentrates on the peasantry, implying that though it is the responsibility of the upper middle-class and clergy to help ameliorate their circumstances, it is the responsibility of the peasantry—and particularly peasant women—to remain on the land for the twin purposes of reproduction and the retention of cultural heritage (*RD* 66).

Early in the narrative, Beatrice Burke recounts her initial engagement with nationalist politics and establishes a relationship between the upper-class heroine and a clergyman as moral guide. Feeling at a crossroads in her life, Burke seeks out her local parish priest, Father Malachy, to discuss her thoughts on becoming a nun. Gently dissuading her from taking this road, instead he loans her his personal copy of John Mitchell's *History of Ireland* (as Butler herself borrowed from a priest friend),<sup>116</sup> sparking a sort of quasi-religious epiphany in which she declares, 'There was lightning in my

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<sup>116</sup>Ní Chinnéide quotes Butler recounting her epiphany: 'when I was seventeen and a half Ireland was revealed to me. I read John Mitchel's *Jail Journal* and rose up from the reading a convinced nationalist and with a fire burning in my heart which has never since been extinguished. I have described in my novel *Ring of Day* something of how my soul's awakening came to me—that part of the book and some of the incidents in it are autobiographical—the rest is imaginary.' Máiréad Ní Chinnéide, *Máire De Buitléir: Bean Athbheochana* (Baile Átha Cliath: Comhar Teoranta, 1993), p. 29.

blood; red lightning lightened through my blood. My dark Rosaleen; my dark Rosaleen' (*RD* 54). Burke continues, stating, 'So this is Nationality. It is the most absorbing and most noble of all human passions. I, who was brought up to scorn and condemn it, ignorant of what I was condemning, I bow before its innate nobility' (*RD* 55). Importantly, the language here—and the priest as the source of her epiphany—indicate the transmission of nationalism to Butler's protagonist via the channel of religious dissemination: for Beatrice, nationalism stands in for religious zeal and borrows its clothing wholesale.

Beatrice's inspiration leads her to nationalist politics and to a subsequent rejection of upper-class society, which to her is a 'prosperous, well-fed people, with many servants and no ideals' (*RD* 25). She chooses instead to use her social position to attempt to stanch the flow of peasant emigrants through philanthropic endeavours with the aid of the local clergy. To this end, Butler, through Beatrice, sets an example for her upper middle-class readers, partnering Beatrice with Father Conroy, the parish priest of her family's ancestral village, who echoes Butler's own sentiments regarding the responsibility of the upper classes in the battle against emigration. As he tells Beatrice:

Our present-day gentry are falling from the land like autumn leaves, while numberless eyes are dry. There will be no caoine [lament] raised over them unless at the eleventh hour they rise to the dignity of their position. "With desolation is the land made desolate, because no man thinketh in his heart" (*RD* 153).

Butler, via the priest, couches her message in religious proverbs, borrowing a Christian emphasis on devotion and service: the previous phrase is adapted from the 'Book of Jeremiah', which focuses on the fall of Jerusalem and on God's punishment of the Jews in response to their pagan worship—most likely a nod to Butler's condemnation of absentee landlordism and the upper classes' indifference to the independence movement. Here the event of emigration is given mythic proportions: it is 'desolation' whereby the countryside is pictured as becoming culturally, morally and even physically sterile, a waste land, unless the élite commit to reviving it. Butler asserts that both the upper and the peasant classes are betraying the suffering nation: the peasant classes are emigrating for want of economic opportunity (a consideration that, at least to some extent, mitigates their guilt), and the upper middle-class are refusing to engage in the philanthropy necessary to rectify the situation—a subject Butler addresses quite frequently in her journalism, particularly in Griffith's *United Irishman*. According to her characters, Butler suggests that the only solution is to forge alliances between the upper middle-class and the clergy, so as to better rural Ireland's economic and social prospects, enticing potential emigrants to stay. As Father Conroy emphasises to Beatrice, "[w]ithout faith we can do nothing." This applies to the natural as well as to the supernatural order. Unless we believe in God, our country, and ourselves, our wills are paralysed' (RD 154). Again, this nationalist mission, of which the fight against emigration is a central part, is attributed a religious significance, led by the example of the upper middle-class and clergy, who are charged with guiding the (infantilized) peasantry and thus effectively determining their fate.

When Beatrice decides to visit a *feis*<sup>117</sup> in her local village, she is disappointed to find it of poor quality: she finds both traditional songs and recitations to be ‘feeble’, ‘drawn out and wearisome’ and notes that ‘all the competitors [are] either old people or children’ (*RD* 157). She is subsequently informed by a fellow attendee that ‘all the boys and girls in these parts go to the States when they are rising up to be young men and women,’ and that that town in particular is known as the ‘Stepping-Stone to the States’ accounting for the dearth of participants (*RD* 157-158). The scene inspires a certain indignation in Beatrice with regard to the cultural toll of peasant emigration, and while she acknowledges that the country is traversing a period of great, though unspecified, social and economic difficulty, she still refuses to condone the idea of emigration, regardless of the circumstances. ‘The nation,’ Beatrice observes ‘was dying, dying before her very eyes. The people had suffered too much here from the dreary drudgery of their lot. They were rushing away panic-stricken to another land where they might have life and joy’ (*RD* 158). This moment of sympathy—or even near-empathy—with the peasantry is as close as Butler ever comes to acknowledging the draw and even necessity of peasant emigration, complicating a narrative that otherwise almost entirely overlooks the specificity of the economic hardships facing the peasantry. While Beatrice admits that village life is difficult for the peasantry, however, both she and a local priest concur that emigration is another ‘form of committing national suicide’ (*RD* 159). The novel continues to develop this concept of rural wasteland as the consequence of peasant emigration, and Butler’s use of evocative language echoes religious pamphlets

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<sup>117</sup> A Gaelic cultural fair.

and ecclesiastical journalism of the period.<sup>118</sup> Kathleen O'Brennan, as another example of this trend, underscores the 'human stream that is [...] leaving our island a desert land'.<sup>119</sup> These descriptions are unstable, suggesting the 'dying land' as both cause and result of emigration, and a mythic vision where exodus is both 'panic', imputing a modicum of responsibility to the peasantry as contaminated by British materialism, and an apocalypse located in the landscape itself.

Conversely, soon after Beatrice's disappointing *feis*, she calls on Father Hugh in a neighbouring village and witnesses the value of successful community service programmes: the priest tells her that through the amelioration of local social schemes, they 'have managed to make Bunowen a place no one cares to leave, and if anyone did broach the idea of going he would be looked upon as a black sheep and shunned by the rest' (*RD* 158). This is the only scene where Butler subtly registers ambivalence toward emigration in rural villages, hinting at the complexity of emigration as a social and economic decision affecting the community rather than a simple question of nationalist or religious duty touching the individual. She resists developing this statement, however, and an abstracted and idealized nationalist discourse persists through the rest of the narrative.

Returning to her own village, Beatrice plans to engage in community service with the aid of her parish priest, Father Conroy, who, having made 'a start at Bunowen,'

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<sup>118</sup> Brown, furthermore, quotes the Archbishop of Tuam as insisting that emigration is 'draining the life-blood of our country.' Stephen Brown J., 'Some Aspects of Irish Emigration', *the Irish Rosary*, August 1955, pp. 606–13 (p. 613).

<sup>119</sup> Kathleen M. O'Brennan, 'Irishwomen and Emigration', *the United Irishman*, 13 February 1904, p. 3.

suggests opening a village library, for instance, so as to provide social diversions for the peasantry for the express purpose of stemming emigration.<sup>120</sup> Here Butler continues her earlier treatise, advocating for the collaboration of the upper middle-class and clergy in philanthropic endeavours to help their social inferiors. Perhaps more importantly, she suggests that this pairing effectuate the exertion of social pressure on those who desire to leave, with the aid of men like Father Conroy whose very voice, Beatrice observes, ‘possesses so many unexpected inflections that at any moment the plea may change into a command, the coaxing tone to a scornful one’ (*RD* 150). This statement highlights at once the parish priest’s role as ‘secular mediator’ and his corresponding ability to effect change in the behaviour of rural peasantry.<sup>121</sup> The united front formed by Beatrice and Father Conroy underpins Butler’s argument about the responsibilities of the upper class and the importance of their active participation in the anti-emigration effort.

Butler’s journalistic pieces were even more invested in direct and focused discussions of upper class women’s responsibilities toward the rural peasantry than her fiction: her Gaelic League pamphlet *Irishwomen and the Home Language*, for example, cites the ‘long-neglected duty’ of the ‘women folk up at the “Big House” [who] seldom

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<sup>120</sup> The theme of middle-class establishment of rural libraries is a popular one in these writings, and, as we will see, Tynan employs it as well. The historical accuracy of this particular type of philanthropy, however, is questionable. Anthony Farmar asserts that ‘establishing libraries was very much a pre-Famine project,’ and that middle-class motivation for their establishment was, moreover, generally associated with a desire to make their tenantry more ‘fit subjects of the Empire’ than to improve their quotidian circumstances. Tony Farmar, ‘Reading and Libraries in Ireland’, 2 October 2013 <Personal Correspondence>.

<sup>121</sup> Lawrence Taylor, ‘The Priest and the Agent: Social Drama and Class Consciousness in the West of Ireland’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 27 (1985), 696–712 (p. 704).

darkened the door of the cottage, or brightened the face of its occupant'.<sup>122</sup> *Ring of Day's* alliance between the upper class and the church, however, is given more space to develop throughout the longer narrative, thereby allowing readers a fuller view of the dynamic and the potential efficacy of the ways the two groups can work together, as Butler herself did with Catholic organisations, to curtail peasant emigration. This suggestion of landlord stewardship and neglected landlord-tenant relations, specifically, will be revisited in Chapter five.

Butler's novel can be interpreted by twenty-first century readers as a sort of manual aimed at upper middle-class readers for how to preserve the tenuous balance of power between the classes which was declining by the end of the nineteenth century. The subject of emigration serves as a focal point for the broader issue of an independent Catholic Ireland as Butler clearly equates nationalist and religious fervour, integrating the language of clerical intervention. Despite her good intentions, her lexical choices are indicative of Butler's remove from the actual socioeconomic issues surrounding emigration: her depictions of emigrants themselves are few, her peasant characters remain almost allegorically simple, observed from a distance and lacking in voice and agency. Despite her sympathy for the suffering of the rural lower classes, Butler's conflation of politics and religion renders emigration itself an inherently morally egregious act, and emphasises, as does much Catholic anti-emigration literature, the importance of geographical propinquity for the moral health of the emigrant female.

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<sup>122</sup> Mary E.L. Butler, 'Irishwomen and the Home Language (Continued)', *All Ireland Review*, 29 December 1900, 4–5 (p. 4).

### **Katharine Tynan**

While her fiction lacks Butler's politically emphatic tone and religious language, Katharine Tynan's depictions of peasant emigration also frequently employ the priest character as moral guide. Tynan, like Butler, was a self-proclaimed nationalist, ardent supporter of Parnell, and a devout Catholic; unlike Butler, however, Tynan was economically dependent on a favourable reception to her work, which was produced largely for a British readership, and thus required a greater amount of discretion when discussing sensitive issues surrounding, particularly, the relationships between the Anglo-Irish and British upper middle-class and the Irish peasantry. While Butler was interested in the political force to be exerted through the direct and often accusatory language aimed at British colonialism, Tynan's position called for more subtlety: as Rose observes, 'she [was] careful not to shock the conventional reader.'<sup>123</sup> Furthermore, Tynan's marriage to the Protestant Henry Hinkson and her years of migrations between Ireland and England would have complicated her regard toward English-Irish and Protestant-Catholic relations, both of which are frequently reflected in her writing. Therefore, while Butler's high flown and rhetorical style gives nationalism an almost spiritual justification, Tynan's use of religious language is both more infrequent and more nuanced, and her imagery is more focused on the creation and maintenance of constructive relationships between religious denominations and political ideologies.

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<sup>123</sup> Rose, p. 80.



The intervention of Catholic clergy figures prominently in Katharine Tynan's 1904 upper middle-class romance,<sup>124</sup> *The French Wife*. While Butler's *Ring of Day* is also upper middle-class fiction, Tynan's differs in that she includes the peasantry in a subplot to her narrative as recipients of the sort of moral guidance which both authors advocate. Though far less politically engaged than Butler's novel, and more invested in the quality of her storytelling, Tynan's novel employs language and tropes evocative of Catholic anti-emigration tracts, pointing up the dangers to peasant women abroad and underscoring, like Butler, the philanthropic responsibility of the upper classes toward the peasantry, and the ways in which their efforts might benefit from the support from the local clergy. Potts notes that 'Tynan's primary audience would likely have been unsympathetic to the cause of Irish nationalism [and] suspicious of Catholicism,' which would have made Tynan's task of portraying a philanthropic alliance between an upper middle-class Protestant protagonist and a Catholic priest a contentious one.<sup>125</sup> In developing these themes, then, Tynan's fiction treads a difficult line between entertaining a largely English readership while also demonstrating her support for Catholic anti-emigrationism.

While Butler liberally incorporates Biblical language—often in the form of direct citation—into *Ring's* narrative, Tynan's employs ecclesiastical reference infrequently and mainly within the context of peasant emigration, suggesting that although Tynan retains an investment in Catholic anti-emigration discourse, she seeks to create a more

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<sup>124</sup> Here I use the term 'upper middle-class fiction' to indicate that fiction where upper middle class characters are central to the narrative.

<sup>125</sup> Potts, p. 81.

even toned narrative in keeping with popular fiction of the time. Furthermore, Tynan's treatment of the relationship between religion and nationalism lacks Butler's proselytizing quality; instead Tynan recognises and emphasises the social power of the priest among the peasantry and the way in which that power can be employed by her upper middle-class readers for the amelioration of the circumstances of the peasantry. She is at the same time, however, committed to the judiciously chosen insertion of religious language and tropes into the context of a middle-class romance.

*The French Wife's* protagonist, Alison Barnard, commits herself to a variety of philanthropic endeavours to improve the lives of the remaining inhabitants of her native Ballycushla. Although already engaged with teaching home industries classes to the local peasantry and introducing a local library system,<sup>126</sup> upon the return of her neighbour, Sir Gerard Molyneux,<sup>127</sup> the owner of the adjoining Kylinoe estate, she becomes increasingly invested in the anti-emigration movement at a government level, aiding him in his campaign for a Parliamentary seat to fight against peasant emigration.<sup>128</sup> In

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<sup>126</sup> Although Butler and Tynan both refer to the middle-class-clergy efforts at, specifically, establishing lending libraries in their respective communities, Farmar attests to the historical inconsistency of this particular type of philanthropy. He asserts that 'although 'the Public Libraries (Ireland) Act 1851 had enabled local authorities to establish local libraries, by 1880 only Sligo and Dundalk had taken advantage of its terms.' Farmar, 'Book-Reading and Publishing in Ireland', p. 132.

<sup>127</sup> Perhaps coincidentally, Dion Boucicault's most popular and best-known play, *The Shaughraun* (1874) features an English officer named Molyneux who is 'charged with keeping order in the [rural Irish] district'. Ward notes that the name is 'carefully de-anglicised' so as to render him a sympathetic character. Tynan may well have employed the same name with the same strategy in mind, considering her mixed British and Irish audience. She might also have taken the name from the 17<sup>th</sup> century philosopher William Molyneux, who, though a protestant Member of Parliament, spoke in favour of Irish autonomy from England. Ward, p. 139; Dion Boucicault, 'The Shaughraun' (New York, 1875) <<https://archive.org/stream/shaughraunorig00boucuoft#page/n5/mode/2up>> [accessed 17 November 2013].

<sup>128</sup> Standlee asserts that Molyneux is 'a virtual clone of George Wyndham, the contemporary politician she most ardently admired and with whom she enjoyed a long-term and cordial correspondence'; adding that Molyneux 'promotes anti-emigration politics of the type that John Redmond, a long-time acquaintance of

addition to her efforts to educate the peasantry and to give them a means by which to support themselves, Alison, with the aid of the parish priest, seeks to advise the local villagers directly, thereby demonstrating her investment in the lives of her tenantry and situating herself as an extension of the moral counsel of the clergy.

Although the local Protestant Archdeacon, Mr Lang, and his wife are regular figures in her social circle, Alison enlists the help of the Catholic parish priest, Father Michael Tracy, to assist her in her work directly with the villagers. In making this distinction between the two clerical figures, Tynan emphasises their differences within their respective social contexts: the Langs are a wealthy, worldly couple who are keenly interested in Lang's possible promotion and relocation back to the genteel districts of Dublin. Father Tracy, on the other hand, is a 'lean, eager-faced young man' who humbly occupies an 'ugly white-washed house' in a neighbouring village.<sup>129</sup> Tynan depicts the two men as figureheads of separate social spheres within the narrative, with only the latter having direct contact with the peasant classes or with the fight against emigration, or with philanthropy *tout court*. By making this distinction between the two men, Tynan emphasises what she (and Butler) viewed as the two faces of emigration: on the one hand were the peasantry who were statistically more inclined to emigrate due to a variety of socioeconomic circumstances (none of which are dealt with in Tynan's narrative) and on the other, the landowning upper middle-class who were, according to

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Tynan's, was advocating at the time of the novel's publication.' These factors suggest both Tynan's engagement and interest in anti-emigration politics and also her reluctance to address these issues head-on but rather to couch them in an easily-digestible format for her English readership. Standlee, pp. 271, 269.

<sup>129</sup> Katharine Tynan, *The French Wife* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1912), p. 33. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text as *FW*.

Tynan and Butler, morally obligated to aid their tenantry to avoid emigration. Here she seeks to demonstrate to her middle-class readers that, in recognising the priests' 'substantial public power'<sup>130</sup> in affairs of both a sacred and secular nature, philanthropically-minded landlords (like Alison Barnard or Beatrice Burke) would naturally have enlisted the parish priest as mediator. By contrast, and more in line with Butler's critique, the Lang's self-interestedness serves a subtle disapproval of those members of the Protestant upper middle-class who, though aware of the various socioeconomic problems facing the peasantry, are largely indifferent to their fate.

The Protestant Alison is a counter-example, however. Tynan's decision to create an interdenominational alliance between her Protestant protagonist and the Catholic priest allows her to address both issues of socio-religious conflict as well as the fight against emigration. While, historically speaking, many Protestant landlords were in favour of, and frequently aided, the emigration of their tenancy,<sup>131</sup> Tynan makes a point of depicting a Protestant landlord who vehemently opposes it, working both on a local level with the priest and peasants and at an official level with Molyneux on legislation. Tynan's choice to unite a Protestant landlord with a member of the Catholic clergy would have demonstrated to Irish readers the good intentions of the Anglo-Irish upper middle-class and shown English readers the affability of the Irish peasantry (as much of

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<sup>130</sup> Delay, p. 108.

<sup>131</sup> Mc Entee asserts that, given pre-Famine conditions associated with overpopulation, 'it was imperative to remove surplus peoples from the estate to achieve optimal conditions for order.' Joanne Mc Entee, 'Pecuniary Assistance for Poverty and Emigration: The Politics of Landed Estate Management and Philanthropy in Mid-Nineteenth Century Ireland' (presented at the Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century Ireland Conference, University College Cork: Society for the Study of Nineteenth-Century Ireland, 2010), p. 11.

Tynan's fiction did). While the novel itself eschews direct discussions of politics, and religious language is used sparingly yet pointedly (in the context of emigrating peasant females, as we will see below), Tynan demonstrates the potential for activity across class and religious boundaries towards ends, like the stemming of emigration, that are nonetheless broadly nationalist.

One such example of this landlord-clergy intervention is in the novel's primary subplot which features a young peasant girl named Kitty Donegan. Kitty's is a story which underscores Alison's pastoral role toward the Catholic villagers, her relationship as a Protestant land owner with the idealistic parish priest, and their shared power to effect change among the lower classes. Alison has learned from Father Tracy that Kitty intends to emigrate with 'a dozen boys and girls' the following week and that the priest has had little luck in discouraging her. He admits when discussing it with Alison and Molyneux that 'I wish I could make it a sin. Then I might be able to do something with them' (*FW* 34). Through this statement, Father Tracy suggests both the potential social power of an official Catholic condemnation and the lack of such a condemnation from the Church hierarchy, despite the variety of Church writing against the practice. Father Tracy concedes here that emigration is not a moral transgression (though the Church attempted to characterise it as such), even in the context of Irish nationalism, thereby admitting the limitations of the Church's involvement in the anti-emigration debate. However, viewed from the perspective of a Catholic nationalist like Tynan, leaving Ireland is *almost* a sin in the eyes of the Church, as it is certainly acting against one's duty to the community. Unlike Butler, however, who would almost make emigration

appear an immoral act in itself, and Ireland a promised or Holy land akin to that in religious discourse, Tynan introduces a note of realism here: while emigration does not quite amount to sinning, the Church might yet play a central role in discouraging young people from leaving.

It is through the character of Kitty that Tynan pursues a larger discourse around the twin ideas of emigrant women's morality and agency. Having been asked by Father Tracy to intervene, Alison visits Kitty at the cottage she shares with her sickly mother, so as to attempt to dissuade her from leaving. Kitty, it is presumed, has been left broken-hearted by Timothy Sweeney, a local boy who rejected her in favour of the comparatively wealthy Nancy Coyle. Father Tracy deems Kitty 'not strong enough for America' (FW 38), a statement which echoes ecclesiastical journalism emphasising the psychological unpreparedness of rural females: the Bishop of Galway, for instance, tells of 'women who were sent back lunatics from America [after] having mentally broken down from the effects of the strain and stress of life'.<sup>132</sup> Alison concedes to let her go, however, upon learning her real motivation: Kitty, it turns out, wishes to leave in order to avoid temptation. As she admits to Alison, 'if [Timothy] came after me I'd be afraid I'd follow him, if he was a hundred times married to Nancy Coyle. I'm afraid he'd come after me, for Nancy won't content him very long' (FW 36-37). She insists that she is 'a bad girl' for recognizing her own moral weakness with regard to her former beau. Alison, however, insists that emigration is the nobler act under the circumstances: 'so you're going to put the width of the Atlantic between you and Nancy Coyle's husband?

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<sup>132</sup> 'The Bishop of Galway on Emigration', *Irish Independent*, 3 March 1905, p. 3.

[...] The people who run a world away from possible temptation are not bad, Kitty, they are good' (FW 37). It is important to note that the onus to resist moral—specifically sexual—temptation rests solely on Kitty (Timothy himself never appears in the story), and that, in merely recognising her temptation, Kitty feels compelled to escape it.

In an interesting contrast to typical Catholic anti-emigration propaganda of the period, the moral temptation for Kitty lies within her immediate environs and not as a result of the distance from her home. Typically in anti-emigration writing, as in Richard Kelly's 1902 Catholic Truth Society pamphlet entitled 'The Evils of Emigration', it is at the émigrée's destination where she is 'forced into a new life beset on every side with dangers and trials.'<sup>133</sup> Despite the fact that Tynan paints rural Ireland as a remote corner of the world 'where,' according to the narrator, 'the primitive values flourished', and emphasises the necessity of (as Molyneux puts it) 'stopping the nation from bleeding to death' through emigration, Tynan admits a certain flexibility with regard to Kitty's case, suggesting, unlike both Church pamphlets and the writings of Mary Butler, that emigration can sometimes present a solution (FW 36, 28). Here, emigration is not only not a sin, but it can be a moral choice—if an unfortunate one.

Tynan, however, adopts the theme and tone of religious propaganda upon Alison's later visit to Kitty's mother, Mrs Donegan. After receiving no word from Kitty for over three months, Mrs Donegan insists that 'Sometimes I think she's dead. If I could be sure of it I'd be happier in my mind. 'Tisn't so hard if you know you're dead in Heaven' (FW 71). She continues with an anecdote reminiscent of ecclesiastical tracts:

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<sup>133</sup> Richard J. Kelly, *The Evils of Emigration* (Dublin: Catholic Truth Society of Ireland, 1902), p. 6.

I once knew a poor woman that lost her little girl in Dublin. It was a little bit of a thing and it strayed from the neighbours' children it was left in the care of. Tale nor tidings of it she never heard. She used often to say she'd be the happiest woman alive if she knew 'twas dead it was [...] Now, that was a trouble, sure enough, not knowing into what hands she'd fall. (*FW* 71)

Echoing tracts like Kelly's Catholic Truth Society pamphlet which endorses the belief that the parents of the emigrant girl—this time eagerly but mistakenly—rushing into the 'giddy and dangerous vortex' of urban life 'would "rather see her dead" than see her go to be exposed to those temptations, traps and trials',<sup>134</sup> Mrs Donegan's tale about an emigrating girl falling victim to the city suggests the perils of the foreign and its ensuing risk to women's moral purity at a distance from the security of rural Ireland. She insists repeatedly the mother's pronouncement that she would be 'the happiest woman alive if she knew that [her daughter] was dead' (*FW* 71). Tynan's language and tone when speaking of the 'little bit of a thing' who 'strayed' suggests the complete passivity and lack of agency of the lost girl in question, a description appropriate to Rosa Mulholland's Chris Conneely from her 1903 novel *The Tragedy of Chris*, a character to be discussed in the following section. Tynan revisits, furthermore, the frequently-employed theme of the dangerous foreigner into whose hands the young woman has fallen. Unlike the historical reality of women who elected to leave their communities, or were oftentimes expected to leave, Tynan's 'little thing' has no control over the evil that lay outside the confines of the community who would otherwise care for her. In both Tynan's and

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<sup>134</sup> Kelly, p. 8.



Kelly's examples, the young peasant women leaving Ireland's safe confines are passive victims to either evil foreigners or to their own materialist desires. Alison insists, however, that Kitty Donegan, while not exactly savvy, is 'a good girl and would keep herself good', suggesting, like ecclesiastical literature, the innate purity of rural Irishwomen, though at the same time recognising the dangers against which she must attempt to 'keep herself good' (*FW* 71).

The story of Kitty Donegan raises an abiding question in relation to anti-emigration writing: can the Irish female peasant emigrant resist temptation beyond Irish soil? Much Catholic anti-emigration writing suggests that peasant women's moral fortitude is entirely predicated on remaining within the confines of Ireland: in his 1904 Lenten pastoral, the Bishop of Waterford refers to 'many young girls [who] fell victims immediately, or almost immediately, after landing in America, to the cruellest fate that can befall any girl on this earth'.<sup>135</sup> Correspondingly, Father Joseph Guinan's widely popular novel *Scenes and Sketches in an Irish Parish* (1903) mourns the

rosy-faced, fair young girls, so pure, so innocent, so pious, [who are] exchanging the calm and holy peace of home for an atmosphere of infidelity, of scepticism and sin. Alas! some of them, now so like unto the angels, might yet be dragged down to shame and crime, and to an early and a dishonoured grave.<sup>136</sup>

Conscience here is presented as public rather than private in order to serve the aims of the anti-emigration debate, and discussions of morality serve larger discourses on

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<sup>135</sup> 'The Dangers of Emigration', *Leitrim Observer*, 7 May 1904, p. 2.

<sup>136</sup> Joseph Guinan, *Scenes and Sketches in an Irish Parish* (Dublin: M. H. Gill, 1903), p. 43.

population depletion. Tynan steps back from this tone in her work, however, and presents a more balanced portrayal of emigration and its dangers; by suggesting that Kitty is escaping moral danger through emigration, Tynan—unlike Butler—attributes to her character a certain measure of agency and calls into question the Catholic ethos of ‘Holy Ireland’ as a refuge from sin, demonstrating a greater measure of ambivalence to hard-line ecclesiastical discourse regarding women, sexuality, and emigration.

Alison, and Tynan’s upper middle-class characters in general are, by contrast, neither subject to this sort of moral scrutiny nor associated with the biblical references cited above. Like Butler’s Beatrice Burke, and, as we will see, with Mulholland’s Sheelia Ryan, women of the upper classes are not only impervious to the dangers associated with emigration, but they are also responsible for saving peasant women from the physical and moral perils of their rural exodus. Women like Alison Barnard who are charged with the pastoral care of the peasantry are simply not faced with similar issues of moral precarity. Tynan’s peasants, and the peasantry in anti-emigration literature more generally, on the other hand, require this organic link to Catholic Ireland in order to retain their purity and to avoid temptation: Kitty Donegan, as it turns out, never leaves Irish soil. Changing her mind before boarding the emigrant ship, she loses her memory and lands in hospital only to return home some three-odd months later. Tynan, then, never exposes Kitty to the dangers against which she must ‘keep herself good’ and simultaneously reinforces the organic link between the peasant and the land while reaffirming the idea of their protection by the upper middle-class-clergy alliance. Tynan has it both ways through this rather contrived narrative strategy: she develops a more

balanced attitude to the dangers of emigration that accords the Irish peasant some degree of responsibility over her own moral conduct, even on foreign soil, but Tynan nonetheless manages to keep her narrative in line with that of Catholic nationalism and makes remaining in Ireland the only possible happy ending. Kitty, incidentally, is discovered by Timothy Sweeney in hospital in Cork, and the two are immediately married, underscoring, as will be discussed in a later chapter, the relationship between marriage, home, and happy endings.

Perhaps most interestingly, Tynan, while not falling in lock-step with Church views on emigration to the same degree as Butler, gives Alison an almost clerical role in relation to Kitty Donegan, whose personal disclosure takes on the tenor of a confession. After giving Kitty her blessing and offering that she might come back to her mother with a 'sound heart', Alison insists that she will keep Kitty's confidence and leaves her with the pious, '[a]nd now good-bye. God be with you, Kitty' (*FW* 37). A sort of benediction ensues where 'The lady bent her stately head and kissed the hot, dry lips of the peasant girl...[then] left her where she was and re-entered the cottage' (*FW* 37). Alison, in the role of Father Tracy, has served as intermediary between Kitty and her mother, keeping her secret with regard to her anticipated sins, and, ultimately, blessing her departure on the grounds that it be morally restorative. The scene offers not only an ideological position on emigration, but also presents a model of behaviour for the upper middle-class. Tynan's scene, though it incorporates ecclesiastical language, demonstrates a few key differences between her depictions and those of Butler, including both a slightly increased sense of realism, a greater degree of agency assigned to the female peasant,

and a corresponding acknowledgement of the reasons for, as well as against, emigration. This theme of moral and spiritual choice and agency with relation to emigration will be examined in greater detail later in this study.

### **Rosa Mulholland**

Rosa Mulholland's dedication to the Irish Catholic stance with regard to emigration is evident in the treatment of religion within her work: her peasant fiction frequently integrates the language of ecclesiastical anti-emigration writing while highlighting the figure of the priest as moral guide. The tone and content of her works, however, lack the political-religious zeal of those of Mary Butler. Instead, Mulholland, like Tynan, targeted both British and Irish upper middle-class audiences, obliging her to handle the social issues she sought to address with a measure of diplomacy. As a member of Ireland's Catholic upper middle-class and a committed philanthropist, Mulholland was interested in portraying anti-emigration scenarios which benefitted from the cooperative endeavours of the Church and middle class like those discussed in the previous sections. Unlike Tynan, however, whose writings often explore the individual cost of emigration, Mulholland's works viewed emigration as merely one of a number of larger social issues adversely affecting Ireland at a community level (with the community also serving as a microcosm for the nation). Thus the themes of women's Christian duty, self-abnegation, and domestic responsibility appear frequently within Mulholland's works and are expressed through the language of the Church, often voiced through the priest as champion of geographically-based moral rectitude. The central positioning of

priests within many of her peasant novels and the language attributed to them<sup>137</sup> reflect Mulholland's ideological investment in the ethos of Catholic nationalism that advocated moral guidance by the clergy for peasant women.<sup>138</sup>

The 1910 social problem novel *Father Tim* addresses a wide variety of societal ills, including not only emigration but also other issues affecting women, such as illegitimacy, domestic violence, and suicide. The fact that Tim is the novel's central character through whom the novel's events are narrated suggests that the novel endorses Mulholland's ideological perspective, played out in fictional narrative. The story revolves around the priest figure, and much of the text—including a good number of direct biblical quotations many of which are close in style and tone to some of the Catholic anti-emigration writing—is expressed through his internal monologue. Father Tim is aided in his guidance of the peasantry by several secondary women characters engaged in Catholic philanthropy, characters similar to Tynan's Alison or Butler's Beatrice, but in the case of the primary upper middle-class philanthropist, Sarah Shine, based, as Foster asserts, on the real life philanthropist Sarah Atkinson.<sup>139</sup> Father Tim serves as an advisor to peasant and working-class women on subjects of both a sacred and secular nature. In placing Tim at the centre of a wide variety of social problems, Mulholland underscores the necessity of the priest particularly in situations of moral

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<sup>137</sup> For example, *Father Tim*, *Norah of Waterford*, *The Return of Mary O'Murrough*, *Nanno*, *The Wild Birds of Killeevy*, among others.

<sup>138</sup> Delay addresses specifically the 'many forms of [c]lerical-female conflicts', underscoring both the sacred and secular power of parish priests in the daily lives of peasant and lower-class women. Delay, p. 109.

<sup>139</sup> Atkinson (1823-1893) was a Dublin-based philanthropist and essayist who published in both the *Irish Monthly* and the *Freeman's Journal*, among others. John Foster, p. 125.

precarity: as Tim chirps optimistically while on his rounds through the Dublin slums, 'Ireland is, sure enough, a ship tossed by the winds and the waves; but God is at the helm!'<sup>140</sup>

Despite Father Tim's sanguine tone, this novel is in many ways one of Mulholland's grittier narratives and complicates the discourse of Catholic anti-emigration pamphlets by employing the same cautionary language as discussed in the context of the temporarily missing Kitty Donegan, here applied to the slums of inner-city Dublin. In one scene, Tim is called on to give the last rights to a young woman who, she admits, has defenestrated herself in order to 'save [her] soul' (*FT* 215). Revealed in the lamplight as 'a round, comely, young face, and fair hair, dabbled with blood—the blood of a martyr,' she informs Tim just before dying that

I answered their advertisement—for a servant—and I came from the country. I thought it was to a decent situation. They got me into their devil's den. When I found what they were I couldn't get out. If I hadn't took a leap out of Hell I'd never ha' seen the face of my God in Heaven! (*FT* 216, 215)

The scene employs the key elements of scenarios common to anti-emigration propaganda, emphasising the moral downfall (and ensuing death) of a naïve rural peasant who becomes the victim of urban malfeasance. An *Irish Monthly* article entitled 'Glimpses of the Gaeltacht' demonstrates a similar strategy. The author, 'A School Teacher', details the emigration of a young girl to the United States who was hired by a

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<sup>140</sup> Rosa Mulholland, *Father Tim* (London: Sands & Co., 1927), p. 214. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text as *FT*.

‘foreign doctor [who] promptly went off to his seaside house and left his staff in charge of the negro butler. A Gaeltacht girl of seventeen and a negro butler!’ After enduring ‘two days of mental agony under lock and key [...] he murdered her with the carving knife [and then] committed suicide.’<sup>141</sup> Both melodramatic anecdotes stress the innate purity of the rural peasant female, the dangerous (sexualised) urban sphere, and her unpreparedness for life outside the confines of her protected community.

In contrast to the *Irish Monthly* anecdote, however, by setting her defenestration in Dublin rather than away from Ireland’s shores, Mulholland, like Tynan, challenges ‘Holy Ireland’ rhetoric that links young women’s morality to Irish soil against a dangerous exterior. Furthermore, the *IM* article lays the blame for the death of the girl at the feet of parents who seek to send their daughters abroad (presumably for remittances), characteristically discouraging independent initiative, particularly with regard to monetary pursuits. Mulholland however, is quick to explain to readers the basics of economic necessity and the dearth of opportunities for the peasant female, lending the dying girl a certain measure of compassion. In the end, however, both Mulholland and Tynan maintain the theory propounded by Catholic anti-emigration propaganda (and suggested in the *IM* article above) that death accompanies—and in many ways is preferable to—moral disgrace.

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<sup>141</sup> (A School Teacher) Anonymous, ‘Glimpses of the Gaeltacht, II’, *the Irish Monthly*, January 1930, 34–42 (p. 41).

Despite the vastly different tone and subject matter of Mulholland's 1915 peasant novel *Norah of Waterford*,<sup>142</sup> which focuses most centrally on issues surrounding land ownership, one scene early in the narrative features both biblical language and a priest as moral guide, again reflecting Mulholland's ethos with regard to emigration. The eponymous Norah is sent on a pilgrimage to the Cistercian monastery at Mount Melleray in order to ask the monks to pray for a neighbouring farmer, Joe Aherne (her eventual romantic match) who is under pressure from the local gombeen man.<sup>143</sup> The fact that Mulholland devotes several pages to a description of the monastery demonstrates both Mulholland's knowledge of and interest in the Order<sup>144</sup> and is indicative of the clergy's importance within the narrative. Norah is well-known to the monks, and upon her arrival asks Brother Francis if he can repair her rosary beads, as she has, presumably, worn them out. While the image is a brief one, it is a strategy which provides Mulholland a means to express Irish peasant piety to her British upper class readers while reinforcing the image of Norah as a faithful, tractable female protagonist.

During her visit, Norah seeks to consult the priest, Father Columba, about the possibility of her emigration in order to support her family. She is immediately remonstrated with 'Oh, this going, going! [...] Cannot you be content to keep on living as

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<sup>142</sup> *Norah of Waterford* was published initially as *Onora* in 1900, then serially in the Jesuit-produced *Irish Monthly* in 1913, then again in book form in 1915. All references here are to *the Irish Monthly* version. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text as *NW*.

<sup>143</sup> A predatory usurer who 'charged exorbitant interest rates for small loans and credit purchases'; a common literary stereotype in much of nineteenth and early twentieth century writing. Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, p. 393.

<sup>144</sup> Mulholland was a visitor there and wrote an account of her visit for *The Irish Monthly* in 1890. Rosa Mulholland, 'The Irish Cistercians of Mount Melleray', *the Irish Monthly*, 18 (1890), 210–14.



you are, my poor Norah?’ (NW 153). Here Mulholland echoes one key element of the ecclesiastical writings about women’s emigration: without fully acknowledging Norah’s position as the eldest daughter of an evicted family and therefore both superfluous and an economic liability, Father Columba suggests that Norah *wishes* to emigrate, rather than focusing on the ‘push factors’. Father Columba continues, issuing a statement characteristic of Holy Ireland rhetoric that privileges communal suffering over individual success:

You are better where you are, child, [...] an Irish girl like you is better half starved at home than earning good wages in New York. Emigration might do if you had a farmer husband—one like Joe Aherne— [...] Such a pair, with a little money to start with, might well take land and prosper. (NW 154)

Here Mulholland employs the clergy character to emphasise the social unacceptability of women’s emigration unless escorted by a male spouse, the anecdote stressing Mulholland’s larger message about peasant women’s domestic and reproductive responsibility in Ireland. Father Columba’s reaction to Norah’s idea of emigrating—her sole active gesture in a narrative where she is otherwise entirely passive—suggests the inappropriateness of a peasant romantic heroine taking initiative, even under dire economic circumstances. And given that Norah is the novel’s female protagonist, Mulholland employs the clergy to emphasise the key concepts of geographical stasis, faithfulness, and passivity that are the order of the day for peasant women considering emigration.

*The Tragedy of Chris* is another example of middle-class fiction which features moments of focused ecclesiastical language and influential clergy at various points throughout the narrative. While similar to *Father Tim* in that it addresses a panoply of social issues affecting the lower classes and women particularly, the novel's tone is less overtly religious while remaining focused on issues of morality. The overarching theme throughout *Chris's* narrative emphasises the Victorian concept of the fallen woman who 'was constructed as a "seduced and abandoned" woman, [and] who was in need of, and deserved, rescue'<sup>145</sup> while at the same time stressing the vulnerability of the peasantry and the responsibility of the upper classes (with the aid of the clergy) to save them from themselves. The novel's protagonist, the orphaned Sheelia Ryan, makes her way from the country workhouse to Dublin to find work. She soon falls in with a crowd of young flower sellers in the Liberties district, of whom the eponymous Chris Conneely is one, and the two young women become close. While traveling with the group of flower sellers to Bray, Chris is approached by a man who suggests that she leave for London, the site of her eventual moral downfall. She recounts the meeting to Sheelia:

'A gentleman spoke to me on Bray Head,' said Chris, 'an' he said I ought to go to England, and be sellin' flowers there. They have only one flower-girl there, an' she's makin' her fortune. "You'd make your fortune there," says he. "The girl isn't half as good-lookin' as you." He bought two bunches from me. Bridey came up then, an' she was angry, and she said to him—

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<sup>145</sup> Maria Luddy, *Prostitution and Irish Society, 1800-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 7.

“We wouldn’t cross over the wather, not to make ten fortunes.’

“Oh,” he says, “it would be nothin’ to be crossin’ the wather, nothin’ but a night’s sleep to the both of yez.”[...]

‘He was awful friendly,’ said Chris, ‘an’ he would have bought more if Bridey hadn’t come up. ‘Twould be nice to be makin’ yer fortune.’<sup>146</sup>

Here, Mulholland recognises the economic advantages that served as ‘pull factors’ in women’s emigration to London, as well as the ambivalence that such opportunities provoked amongst peasants themselves. She nonetheless links Chris’s tragedy to her naïveté and her materialist impulses: Mulholland suggests that Chris’s desire to make her fortune leads to her kidnapping and eventually into a life of sin in London.

After Chris disappears, Sheelia visits churches and convents where ‘priests and nuns gave pitiful ear to her story’ (TC 136). Eventually she learns that Chris is ‘astray on the streets of London [...] among bad people’ and vows to search for her (TC 189). At this point she consults Father Hanlon, ‘a hard-worked member of a religious order’ who, despite his interest in Chris’s well-being, ‘disapprove[s] of Sheelia’s adventuring journey to London alone’ and counsels her not to go (TC 191). The priest tells her that ‘even if you discovered where they have her, if it is a wicked place, you could not venture to go near it’ (TC 191). Though Sheelia insists that ‘[t]here is no place I wouldn’t go into for Chris,’ the priest insists that ‘[y]ou couldn’t, you mustn’t [...] [y]ou don’t know what you

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<sup>146</sup> Rosa Mulholland, *The Tragedy of Chris* (London: Sands & Co., 1903), pp. 124–125. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text as TC.

are talking about' (TC 191). Sheelia decides to make the journey, however, partially out of loyalty and partially out of a sense of guilt, admitting to herself that if she 'had prayed enough before, perhaps Chris would have been saved from the misfortune that had overtaken her' (TC 192). This integration of religious language,<sup>147</sup> Sheelia's sense of responsibility and selflessness,<sup>148</sup> and consultation with clerical figures underscore the degree to which Mulholland both echoes Catholic rhetoric and defers to religious authority in her writing.

However, the fact that Sheelia can travel unaccompanied to London, find Chris, and return to Ireland unscathed is because Sheelia is actually Cecelia Fitzmorris, heir to the fortune of Lady Kilthomond of Waterford. Her fate is contrasted with that of Chris, who has become mentally unstable after her harrowing experience and dies soon afterward, reasserting the previously addressed link between moral downfall and death. That Sheelia is impervious to Chris's fall and that she feels a strong sense of duty and protection towards Chris can be directly tied to Sheelia's unannounced class status: Connor O'Daly—a Londoner of Irish peasant stock who aids in Sheelia's search for Chris, marvels that she can '[linger] about the London streets at night and com[e] to no harm! It must be that the angels [...] are following her' (TC 261). These themes of upper middle-class responsibility and moral invulnerability echo the discourses of both Butler and Tynan with regard to their upper middle-class protagonists (Sheelia, like Beatrice

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<sup>147</sup> Sheelia insists that 'God was good, and He would lead her to Chris'; the nuns with whom she stays upon her arrival in London also attempt to deter her from searching the streets, but Sheelia insists that 'God will help me' Mulholland, *The Tragedy of Chris*, p. 201.

<sup>148</sup> Mulholland equates her with Joan of Arc and the Jewish Queen Esther, who possessed 'courage and self-devotion to her suffering people' Mulholland, *The Tragedy of Chris*, pp. 171, 230.

and Alison, possesses a ‘fearless independence of character’), underscoring their message to their readers regarding the upper middle-class’s ability and duty to take care of women who are unable to care for themselves (*TC* 271).

Like ecclesiastical rhetoric that ties women’s morality to ‘Holy Ireland’, Mulholland admits that though ‘Dublin’s a dead place, an’ it’s dirty,’<sup>149</sup> O’Daly wonders why ‘the heavens don’t open and rain down fire upon London!’ (*TC* 261). The wicked London that Mulholland constructs underscores a larger message regarding the female peasant emigrant’s inability to resist temptation beyond Irish soil. Like the discourse surrounding Kitty Donegan’s disappearance, certain passages in this novel suggest that death is preferable to moral downfall: after Chris vanishes, Mulholland maintains that it was ‘illustrative of the estimation in which [Chris’s father’s] high sense of morality was held by the neighbours that the comforters who knew him best assured him of their belief that Chris was dead, rather than she had “gone to the bad”’ (*TC* 136). Furthermore, while searching for Chris, Sheelia herself insists that ‘If I knew she was safe in heaven I’d be content’ (*TC* 138). Such a discourse underscores the inherent purity of the rural Irish peasant female while simultaneously assuming her indefensibility against the temptations and dangers of the urban sphere.

Sheelia and Chris return to Ireland (‘their humble and wholesome home’) and importantly to rural Ireland, where the agricultural backdrop is constructed as a physically and morally recuperative space for Chris (*TC* 306). Despite Sheelia’s hopes

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<sup>149</sup> Particularly the Liberties neighbourhood, which was a famous centre of prostitution at the time of publication—a fact to which Mulholland does not refer in her narrative. Mulholland, *The Tragedy of Chris*, p. 104.

that Chris would ‘maybe get the colour back into her cheeks, and the spark of light into her eyes again,’ she becomes increasingly mentally unstable and finds comfort in the white-haired parish priest, Father Bernard, who was ‘the only other person besides Connor O’Daly who ever knew the true story of the killing of Chris’ (TC 299, 314). While Sheelia will marry O’Daly and inherit Lady Kilthomond’s considerable fortune, Chris will eventually be buried in the local cemetery, her only consolation being the knowledge that ‘Father Bernard says I’m the Lord’s own child’ (TC 316). That is, despite having ‘gone to the bad’, she is assured her place in Heaven because she retains her childlike innocence. The tone of the novel’s ending and dénouement have a cautionary tale element, however, suggesting that Mulholland cannot allow Chris a happy ending because of Victorian-era ‘preoccupation with themes of legitimacy and pollution.’<sup>150</sup> Here Mulholland adheres both to the Catholic rhetoric which regards emigration as the slippery slope to the moral defeat of the rural peasant female and to the conventions of the romantic novel which reward the returning upper middle-class protagonist with marriage, home, and fortune.

## Conclusion

The fictional works examined here develop and adapt the brief anecdotes from ecclesiastical journalism touched on earlier in the chapter, demonstrating more fully the central tenets of anti-emigration fiction: the need for spiritual guidance given by both the upper middle-class and the clergy to emigrant women, the role of Ireland in

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<sup>150</sup> C.L. Innes, *Woman and Nation in Irish Literature and Society, 1880-1935* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994), p. 27.

protecting a female sexual purity endangered beyond its shores, and the dangers of leaving the sacred space of a rural community. The employment of the priest figure as moral guide and the integration of language of clerical intervention, however, differ a great deal between the authors discussed in this section, due to individual ideology, political stance, and audience. While all three authors focus on the upper middle-class's and clergy's shared responsibility toward the peasantry, Butler clearly equates nationalist and religious fervour, involving the priest figure as a sort of cultural icon who speaks for Butler herself. Tynan's depiction of the cooperative efforts of middle-class Protestants and the Catholic clergy, as well as her sparing use of ecclesiastical language, demonstrate a greater deference to her diverse readership of both Irish Catholics and British Protestants. Furthermore, her discourse with regard to the role of the middle-class as an aid to the clergy is slightly more nuanced, perhaps because Tynan's aim with *The French Wife* was more literary than political. Mulholland falls between the two, as her narratives—both in terms of her use of religious language and in terms of the priest character as moral guide—adhere more firmly to Catholic discourse with regard to the necessity of Catholic intervention for young peasant women. In comparison to Butler, however, her nationalist views are subordinated to a moral tone that borrows style and authority from religious teaching in its own right.

The authors' depictions of the emigrating peasant female in relation to the moral and spiritual issues raised in the pervasive religious rhetoric of these novels vary considerably. Butler's peasant emigrants remain almost allegorically simple, lacking voice and agency and serving as a scaffold upon which to construct a political narrative.

Tynan, by contrast, steps back from the idea that emigration is in itself a sin, or inherently morally egregious, and also suggests—unlike Butler and Mulholland—that a pious individual might be able to withstand foreign threats to his or her virtue. Tynan also more readily recognises the frequent necessity of emigration, or at least the reasons that make emigration an intelligible choice. Tynan alone of the three authors allows emigrant women a greater agency to grapple with their moral dilemmas; in the end, however, she, like Mulholland, is incapable of disregarding the central tenet of Catholic discourse on emigration that emphasises the importance of geographical propinquity for the moral health of the emigrant female.

This moral critique of the emigrant female continues into the next chapter, 'Departures and Destinations', as it examines the treatment of the departing female emigrant and her inability to defend herself against the perils of the foreign urban sphere.



## Chapter Two: Departures and Destinations

This chapter examines the treatment of female protagonists' experience of travel in relation to emigration in the works of Mary Butler and Katharine Tynan. I explore the ways in which these authors employ the motif of the voyage, specifically the departure and the destination, drawing on patterns of story from anti-emigration literature of the period. The trope of the departure scene—the tableau of familial separation frequently reproduced in the contemporary press where one or more young members of a family board a ship bound away from Ireland's shores—functions to create moments of pathos, allowing the writers to employ the cultural currency of this image to persuade readers of the cost of emigration. These scenes of departure, additionally, permit writers to create moments of appraisal which effectively test the characters' nationalism or loyalty to the Irish social order.

The other key themes to be discussed—those of emigrants' choice of destination and their attempts to replicate Ireland while abroad—function in conjunction with the trope of departure as an aspect of the same anti-emigration strategy. The ways in which authors contrast specific destinations against Ireland, as well their literary characters' need to reproduce home while abroad, underscore the myth of 'Holy Ireland' and the corresponding idea of a geographically-grounded moral superiority that cannot be transferred or recaptured elsewhere. The discourse of departures and destinations comments on issues of virtue raised in the previous chapter, developing the idea of the

moral critique of the peasantry and its link to the potential dangers that lay in waiting for those women who leave.

### **Historical context**

In his study of Irish female emigration, Pauric Travers asserts that the migration process 'has generally been seen in male terms'.<sup>151</sup> He notes that, at odds with historical and statistical evidence, literary and artistic representations of emigration tend to feature depictions of 'typical' scenes of departure where young men (rather than women) are forced to leave Ireland, and their families, behind them.<sup>152</sup> One such example, T.F.'s 'Occasional Sketches of Irish Life', details the following scene where

[g]rief is depicted on every countenance. Tears are flowing down the faces of the women, and occasionally the sleeve of a rough coat passes across the eyes of its wearer, betraying a grief too manly for sobs or moans, but deep enough to wring from stern manhood a tear.

The scene reaches its climax when discussing the relationship between father and son:

The centre figure of this group was an old man whose features displayed the characteristic nobleness of the genuine Irish peasant. [...] His eyes were red and swollen, and an occasional rattling sound in the throat denoted the presence of a sorrow which a rigid setting of the muscles of the face with difficulty concealed.

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<sup>151</sup> Pauric Travers, "'There Was Nothing for Me There': Irish Female Emigration, 1922-1971", in *Irish Women and Irish Migration*, ed. by Patrick O'Sullivan (London: Leicester University Press, 1995), pp. 146–67 (p. 146).

<sup>152</sup> Travers cites Seán Keating's painting 'Economic Pressure' as an example. Travers, p. 146.

The old man's head rested on the shoulder of a stalwart handsome youth, who vainly endeavoured to persuade him to moderate a grief now nearly beyond control. "You shall see me again, Father, before you die. My Mother and you shall be happy yet."<sup>153</sup>

While women appear on the margins of his tale, the details of this departure take place exclusively between father and son. In contrast to the economic and social reality of Ireland at the time, it is a 'stalwart handsome [male] youth' who leaves to seek his wealth across the Atlantic and not—as would have been much more likely the case—a sister or girlfriend.

While Travers' study details the economic and cultural importance of women's emigration, and does acknowledge that it was 'the subject of regular public comment', it neglects to mention that the very image of the departing female was frequently employed by nationalist writers as political fodder for anti-emigration arguments.<sup>154</sup> For example, unlike the aforementioned anecdote where the greatest risk to the emigrating male is the 'fever-laden air of the swamp through which the new railway is being made',<sup>155</sup> representations of women's emigration featured in Catholic nationalist press and literature of the time tended to highlight, as we have seen, the moral and spiritual rather than physical dangers associated with women's emigration to urban destinations. Katherine Mullin, in her study of James Joyce's short story from *Dubliners*, 'Eveline', notes how Joyce himself sought to subvert one of the era's most potent propagandas,

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<sup>153</sup> T.F., 'Occasional Sketches of Irish Life: No. I: The Emigrant', *the Irish Monthly*, July 1873, 11–14 (p. 12).

<sup>154</sup> Travers, p. 154.

<sup>155</sup> T.F., p. 13.

producing a story of 'frustrated emigration and potential sexual danger'.<sup>156</sup> 'Eveline', a story commissioned by *Irish Homestead* editor George Russell (who wanted something 'simple, rural [with] pathos' which 'play[ed] to the common understanding' of common anti-emigration tropes), actually played against anti-emigration stories found regularly in the nationalist press.<sup>157</sup> 'Eveline', by choosing not to emigrate, presumably averts sexual danger, but instead succumbs to both sexual frustration and a Catholic sense of familial duty. In so doing, Joyce's story directly contradicts the trend observed in this thesis (indeed his scenario implicitly sets itself against the dominant Catholic ideology and attendant ideological fiction). Instead, his scenario's negative depiction of fidelity to domestic duty and its cost to his protagonist suggests that staying home might be as bad a fate, if not worse, than whatever might await Eveline abroad. Consequently, Joyce's turn away from the common anti-emigration rhetoric of the period intentionally frustrates and disappoints the reader with Eveline's decision. Thus, while T.F.'s male emigrant 'fondly dreams of the day when he shall return rich and prosperous' to his parents, depictions of female emigrants, 'Eveline' included, suggest that leaving is equivalent to a shirking of their responsibility within the home, where they are perceived as remaining in the safe geographical confines of the family. For Joyce, however, that safety comes at a great cost.

Travers notes the conflict between the reality of women's emigration and the ecclesiastical ethos, asserting that the latter 'saw emigration as evil, dangerous, even

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<sup>156</sup> Katherine Mullin, *James Joyce, Sexuality and Social Purity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 57.

<sup>157</sup> Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce*, New and rev. ed., with corrections. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 163.

anti-social.’<sup>158</sup> The assertion by the Catholic and conservative press of a moral divide between city and country attached a negative connotation to the large number of young emigrant women who were obligated to seek work in urban destinations. Catholic Church anti-emigration literature—even through the first half of the twentieth century—‘highlighted the moral danger posed to young women who [...] preferred the “kitchens, factories and dancehalls of other lands” and fled from “the green fields of Ireland to the grey streets of an alien underworld.”’<sup>159</sup> The language here suggests that, rather than acknowledging economic necessity, women’s emigration is perceived as a ‘preference’, underscoring the selfish abandonment of domestic responsibility. The fact that within these urban depictions frequently the specific destination is often not even mentioned within Catholic propaganda—the United States, Canada and Australia, for example, tend to remain simply the countries themselves, and therefore vague and ill-defined—connotes anonymity, isolation, and sense of threat from the world outside rural Ireland.

When specific destinations are mentioned in the literature under discussion here, they tend to be closer to home. Authors like Tynan (as we will see in the following section) and Mulholland frequently employ locations like London, Liverpool, or Glasgow, which were popular end points for rural Irishwomen in search of domestic work.<sup>160</sup> These cities would have been readily recognized by Irish and English readers alike for

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<sup>158</sup> Travers, p. 163.

<sup>159</sup> *The Irish Press*, 23 April 1948, as quoted in Travers, p. 163.

<sup>160</sup> Fitzpatrick notes that the great “Irish” cities abroad were New York, Philadelphia, Boston and Chicago in the United States, and Liverpool, Glasgow, Manchester and London in Britain.’ Fitzpatrick, *Irish Emigration 1801-1921*, p. 33.

their popularity with Irish emigrants (a popularity based mainly on geographical convenience), rendering them at once evocative and familiar, lending an air of verisimilitude for British and Irish readerships. Furthermore, their mention in popular narrative dovetails with Church pamphlets warning of particular urban hotbeds of iniquity: Alice Dease's undated Catholic Truth Society pamphlet 'On the Broad Road', for example, warns readers against the 'sin and wickedness of London streets', lending a geographic specificity to emigrant women's potential moral downfall.<sup>161</sup>

While the majority of anti-emigration fiction employs these external locations fairly regularly, it is worth noting that not all sinful cities in such fiction are locations for emigration: Dublin—whose slums were arguably Europe's worst at the end of the nineteenth century—can appear in this light (in the more realistic depictions of Rosa Mulholland's *The Tragedy of Chris*, for instance), posing a threat not unlike that faced abroad. Most often however, detailed descriptions of the dangerous or sinful connotations of Ireland's urban centre were avoided by writers like Tynan and Butler; frequently Dublin was depicted as a shopping or social destination for upper class characters, or, at the very most, as a mere step on a slippery moral slope toward London. Rose observes that, considering her readership, 'it was most prudent for [Tynan] to be apolitical with a nuance of conservatism', thereby rendering Dublin as innocuous a destination as possible.<sup>162</sup> For Butler, on the other hand, her political ethos

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<sup>161</sup> Alice Dease, *On the Broad Road* (Dublin: Catholic Truth Society of Ireland, no date), p. 25.

<sup>162</sup> Rose, p. 53.

mandated that she treat the theme of moral degradation as an aspect of British influence and therefore contradictory to Ireland's inherent purity.

The degree to which foreign destinations are depicted as sinful and dangerous is indicative of the degree to which the author seeks to depict Ireland as the inverse: Ireland retains its holy allure, a safe haven for the naïve Irish peasant emigrant ill-equipped to handle the temptations of the urban exterior. These images juxtaposing 'Holy' rural Ireland with its sinful urban antithesis regularly appeared in the popular press at the time, particularly within the context of articles which sought to actively discourage young women's emigration to urban areas. The 1925 *Irish Monthly* article by 'Eithne' entitled 'The Saving of Girls', for example, shows the emigrant girl who leaves Ireland for 'the far-off arid places of the earth' only to be 'bound [...] to the factory, counter, or warehouse', her world 'punctuated by wild hours with boon companions on the streets'.<sup>163</sup> The author's freighted language of aridity, hard work, and godless frivolity combine to suggest a destination far from the virtuousness of the Irish countryside. Furthermore, it suggests an attack on 'traditional' Catholic values—the author asserts that 'the old ideals are gone'<sup>164</sup>—presumably ideals where one's sense of duty prevailed over individual desires; and a danger for emigrant women themselves, '[r]ipe prey for the prowler, she walks the streets in the strength of her supple youth, in

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<sup>163</sup> Eithne, 'The Saving of Girls', *The Irish Monthly*, March 1925, 127–32 (p. 128).

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.

the weakness of her unformed character'.<sup>165</sup> These fallen women could, she suggests, be brought back into the fold through 'the vineyard of religious social service' at home.<sup>166</sup>

Articles like these in the Catholic press regularly conflate exaggerated depictions of sexual danger, hard work, and isolation far from the secure confines of the emigrant's home community. Within these articles, danger for women was routinely associated with sexual temptation and predation, so the enticements that these cities offered were not simply material gains but sinful pleasures, invariably associated with sexual peril. Rural women emigrants who were regularly depicted as unprepared for the urban exterior (*The Irish Monthly* characterises them as 'timid and tender Irish maidens')<sup>167</sup> were thus encouraged to remain home within what de Blacam described, following the contemporary ideology, as 'their rightful spiritual environment'<sup>168</sup> for their own safety, under the watchful eye of the Church and the community.

In Schrier's study of American emigration, he notes that chain migration facilitated large-scale emigration and created unique Irish communities away from home, actually preserving cultural and religious practices and transferring them from home to the cities where the Irish most frequently emigrated.<sup>169</sup> In terms of anti-emigration literature, however, mapping Revivalist-era tropes associated with rural Ireland (as religious and community-oriented) onto what is constructed as a morally

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid, p. 129.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid, p. 132.

<sup>167</sup> 'An Irish Nun in Foreign Parts', *the Irish Monthly*, November 1885, 589–92 (p. 589).

<sup>168</sup> A. de Blacam, 'Emigration: The Witness of Geography', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, 39 (1950), 279–88 (p. 280).

<sup>169</sup> Arnold Schrier, *Ireland and the American Emigration, 1850-1900* (Chester Springs, PA: Dufour Editions, 1997), p. 15.



inferior environment intentionally exaggerates the differences between 'here' and 'there', demonstrating both the importance of home and the impossibility of recreating it abroad. For women characters specifically, the trope of the emigrant who reinvents Ireland abroad merely serves to reinforce the idea of the rural peasant who requires a link to her religious and cultural roots or the famed purity of Irish womanhood might evaporate as soon as she leaves Irish shores.

Historical evidence does confirm the idea that Irish women preserved their sense of cultural identity through, in many cases, Catholic organisations and in domestic matches made to other Irish emigrants.<sup>170</sup> MacRaild notes that 'Catholicism implied a sense of communal cohesion and mutual identity [...] in an often hostile social environment'.<sup>171</sup> Nationalist authors whose literature features depictions of emigrants abroad were particularly eager to employ the theme of the creation of Catholic Ireland away, as it dovetailed nicely with an ecclesiastical discourse which 'explicitly tied together nationalism and catholicism'.<sup>172</sup> These representations, then, indicate the ideological animus of the author behind them, suggesting that an invented Ireland, while it can reinforce a sense of cultural identity in the emigrant, falls short of actually replacing the geographically contingent essence of 'Holy Ireland'. This theme will be discussed in greater detail later in the chapter when looking at Katharine Tynan's short stories. The historical reality of women's experiences, however, tends to contradict the

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<sup>170</sup> Guinnane, for instance, notes that 'Irish people who wanted to marry other Irish people could easily find a partner from among other emigrants.' Guinnane, p. 107.

<sup>171</sup> MacRaild, p. 76.

<sup>172</sup> Valiulis, 'Neither Feminist nor Flapper: The Ecclesiastical Construction of the Ideal Irish Woman', p. 172.

negative literary depictions of Ireland abroad: while fictive emigrants are, as M.J.M. asserted, ‘much-to-be-pitied [and] practically homeless and friendless’,<sup>173</sup> according to historians like Schrier and Diner, real emigrants often thrived economically and socially within communities created outside the Ireland’s geographical confines.

The authors discussed in this chapter all employ these tropes of departure and destination, but with markedly different emphases. The ways in which they treat the accompanying themes of isolation, danger and rootlessness indicates their level of commitment to Catholic nationalist anti-emigration discourse. Furthermore, their engagement with thematic concerns such as protagonist agency and gender politics reflects their priorities in relation to literature as a vehicle for political change or literature as a creative endeavour.

### Departures

Catholic nationalist depictions of departure at the turn of the twentieth century tend to repeatedly stress those aspects of rural emigration which would have been particularly evocative to their readership: cultural dispossession, rural depopulation, and the breakup of the family. M.W.Brew’s poem ‘To-morrow at the Breaking of the Day’, for example, is written from the perspective of the departing emigrant and touches on all of these issues. The poem’s second stanza declares:

I leave thee, O my land! Because the stranger | Ruleth as master by my father’s  
hearth— | I go to be in foreign lands a ranger | And find at last a grave in foreign

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<sup>173</sup> M.J.M., ‘Our Young Work-Girls’, *the Irish Monthly*, 1879, 469–73 (p. 471).

earth; | To eat the bread of exile and of sorrow | (How bitter, only they who eat  
it know) | And with the rising of the sun to-morrow | From country, home, and  
kindred I must go. | And sail away | In the dawning gray, | To-morrow at the  
breaking of the day!<sup>174</sup>

Representative of anti-emigration literature of the period, the poem features the same pattern of story as journalistic anecdotes and longer fictional depictions of departures. The poem's tone of pathos and resignation, along with its evocation of a youth forced to leave home as a direct result of British rule ('the stranger'), suggest the lack of agency regularly associated with the peasantry; it also emphasises the isolation of the departing emigrant and the fragmentation of the family unit. All of these themes appear throughout the genre, particularly in the work of Mary Butler, and, to a lesser extent, in works by Katharine Tynan.

Mary Butler's 1901 short story 'The Letter from the States', for instance, depicts the tearful separation of mother and son due to economic hardship. Upon leaving the family home, the son tells his mother that

it's good-bye now, but not good-bye for ever. I'll come back to you when I've  
made a fortune out there, and we will be happy at home together yet. And I  
promise to come back and stay with you awhile as soon as ever I can put the

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<sup>174</sup> M. W. Brew, 'To-Morrow at the Breaking of the Day', *the Irish Monthly*, December 1887, 708–9.

money together and get a holiday, and I'll be looking forward to it every day of my life.<sup>175</sup>

The narrator recounts how the young man then 'took one look round the room where he had grown to be a man, and passed out of the door, but there he turned to kiss the door-posts.'<sup>176</sup> He tells his mother that 'I never knew how much I loved home and country till now. [...] God bless our land and people. May I be able to do something for them when I come back.'<sup>177</sup> Exceptionally for Butler, this emigrant is not at fault for leaving his family: both characters here are viewed (as in Brew's poem) as victims of penury resulting from British colonialism. Butler's highly sentimentalized language serves to underscore key fictional tropes of the passive, geographically immobile mother and the son's capitulation to the family's dire circumstances. Butler's employment of this pattern of story, as well as her evocation of the image of the peasant resigned to emigration, merely serve to underscore her larger discourse with regard to the importance of the movement for Irish independence, which would ostensibly heal Ireland's economic and social ills, among which is the breakup of the family unit.

Since Mary Butler's political discourse entailed the ethos that the home was 'the nucleus of a nation',<sup>178</sup> her work focuses on the effects of emigration on the home, and increasingly, on the female emigrant in particular. Butler, and to a lesser extent

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<sup>175</sup> Mary E.L. Butler, *A Bundle of Rushes* (Dublin: Sealy, Bryers and Walker, 1901), p. 130.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>178</sup> Mary E.L. Butler, 'Womanhood and Nationhood III', p. 6.

Katharine Tynan, and Revivalists generally (as evidenced in figures like the sean-bhean bhocht and Cathleen Ní Houlihan), charged women with the transmission of national identity and the moral well-being of the people, reinforcing the political importance of the phenomenon of female emigration. Maryann Valiulis, in her study of nationalist constructions of the ideal Irish woman, asserts that the home was consistently linked to the nation, and therefore '[a]ny attempt by women to leave their domestic confines would wreak havoc not only on the home but on the nation as well.'<sup>179</sup> In creating scenes of departure from the home and nation, nationalist authors employed images of pathos to build an argument against peasant women's emigration.

Recounted as a first person narrative, Butler's 1904 *United Irishman* article entitled 'Musings at Cove, Cork, and Baile-Atha-Claith' addresses the theme of peasant emigration through a series of anecdotes emerging purportedly from Butler's own visit to the docks at Cove (Cobh) on 25<sup>th</sup> June 1904. Capturing scenes of departure among rural peasants bound for the United States, Butler asserts that of 'all the sad spots in this sad land of ours surely the saddest is Cove [because it is] the outlet through which flows a ceaseless stream of the nation's life-blood.'<sup>180</sup> Unlike the aforementioned journalistic representations of the common Irish departure scene, however, Butler employs the trope of departure as a context for a discussion of national responsibility and culpability. Setting the tone for a fervent discussion of Irish exodus, Butler establishes herself as witness to the unhappy event:

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<sup>179</sup> Valiulis, 'Neither Feminist nor Flapper: The Ecclesiastical Construction of the Ideal Irish Woman', p. 170.

<sup>180</sup> Mary E.L. Butler, 'Musings at Cove, Cork, and Baile-Atha-Claith', *the United Irishman*, 16 July 1904, p. 3.

Often had I heard the departure of the emigrants described, but the reality surpassed my grimmest expectations. There they filed before our eyes in tens and twenties, stalwart, broad-shouldered, young, and comely girls, with the bloom of health on their cheeks, breathless in their haste to shake the dust of the shore off their feet, and step aboard the tender which was to bring them on the first stage of their journey towards the unknown.<sup>181</sup>

In addition to her implication of the exodus of Ireland's vitality, the ship, furthermore, is 'a huge monster called an Atlantic liner' which she equates to 'the fabled monsters of old [who] levied a toll on the flower of the people.'<sup>182</sup> Giving these scenes the nationalist resonance of folktale, Butler depicts emigration as another fabled foe in Ireland's history, against which the peasantry must struggle. As with famine or malign fairies, emigration will rob Ireland of the potential attached to subsequent generations.

In this series of accounts, Butler expresses her disappointment in the difference between what she expects from this departure scene and the reality she claims to witness. Butler's highly emotive language emphasises the country simultaneously as a body (losing its 'life-blood') and a family (the emigrant is 'the child whose father's dust mingles with its soil, whose name and traditions are inseparably bound up with it'), so as to underscore the gravity and sense of injury in what she views as the treason of departure, and raising expectations of grief and personal loss.<sup>183</sup> These scenes serve to illustrate what she perceives as a lack of loyalty within the current generation of

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

emigrants who, victims of the influence of British materialism, have learned to value personal benefit over larger community and national goals:

To me the most painful and serious feature of the emigrants' departure was the indifference, amounting in some instances to the positive levity, of their manner. They apparently felt no grief at saying farewell to either country or family. They took farewell of their mothers without shedding a single tear, and as for their motherland they did not think it worthy [of] even a parting glance.<sup>184</sup>

Like Tynan, Mulholland, and other Revival-era writers, Butler's employment of the trope of Mother Ireland ('motherland') plays on her readers' familiarity with this charged nationalist icon to imply both a personal callousness and a threefold disloyalty in breaking up the family unit, deserting the rural countryside, and abandoning the national ideal. Not unimportantly, however, this sentimentalised sense of blame is attributed solely to depictions of peasant women; on the contrary, works that speak more directly to her upper middle-class peers (as we have seen in *The Ring of Day* and as discussed below) downplay peasants' responsibility and emphasise instead upper middle-class women's philanthropic duties. These duties include, as touched upon in the previous chapter, moral guidance in addition to the responsibility to provide for and steer politically and culturally those vulnerable women who might otherwise be forced to emigrate. In both cases, however, Anglicisation (that is, 'the pervasive influence of British [...] capitalism on post-Famine Irish culture'<sup>185</sup>—a key plank in the Gaelic League

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<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, p. 363.

ethos) is blamed for peasant and upper middle-class indifference to the nationalist struggle.

Butler immediately counters this depiction of indifferent emigration with a fictive example of previous generations' departure scenes—in an era when, she claims, emigrants were pushed abroad by circumstances rather than being seduced by personal reward—so as to demonstrate both their loyalty and what she believes is the loss of Irish culture and national feeling among the current 'emigrating class':

When the exodus began, and up to a few years ago, the emigrants, I am told by those who saw them going, were utterly overcome with grief. It seemed like tearing the hearts out of their bosoms when the moment came for loosening the convulsive clasp of their mothers' arms, and they often kissed and watered with their tears the sacred soil of their country before they left it, with slow, lingering steps.<sup>186</sup>

The language she chooses to depict the above image harks back to Church literature connoting a Biblical exodus of a chosen people leaving Holy Ireland's 'sacred soil'. Her language echoes Catholic accounts like Father Joseph Guinan's *Scenes and Sketches in an Irish Parish* where a young girl leaving the village 'kissed the floor of the Church [and] watered with her tears the feet of the great Crucifix inside the door' before she 'faced the ordeal of the last farewell at the railway station.'<sup>187</sup> The collective image produced by these vignettes is a mixture of nationalist and Catholic iconography intended to speak

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> Guinan, p. 42.



to an audience that shared the same cultural storehouse of knowledge, underscoring the idea of familial-*cum*-national responsibility. Here, even Butler acknowledges that economic necessity has historically been a factor in emigration, and therefore views previous generations of emigrant as less culpable as a result. She feels compelled, however (and it is perhaps politically expedient), to attribute a greater degree of blame to the contemporary emigrant, who is leaving in an era of changed political circumstances when the struggle for independence perhaps seems at such a critical juncture.

Immediately following Butler's discussion of the emigrant departures, she includes a short anecdote which details the second segment of the above article and points to the core of her argument: her critique of the upper middle-class. While the article's departure scenes are obviously intended to elicit an emotional response regarding emigration's negative impact on the nation as a whole, the following scene employs a more direct rhetorical approach toward the subject of upper class responsibility. For, unlike the peasantry who, Butler asserts, are unwitting victims of Anglicisation, the upper classes are (as touched upon in the previous chapter) consciously shirking their duty to not only care for the peasantry but also to lead by example with regard to the nationalist movement.

On the train returning from the scene of departure at Cove, Butler's narrator, accompanied by another Gaelic Leaguer, encounters a 'particularly aggressive specimen of West-Britonism [...] in the form of a 'young woman, dressed very gaudily, and whose

ungloved hands were loaded with rings.’<sup>188</sup> Clearly a member of the upper classes, the woman is therefore someone whom Butler and her companion wish to ‘recruit’ to help promote the nationalist cause. The ensuing brief interaction among the three passengers suggests a caricature of the type of reader whom Butler seeks both to critique and to shame into aiding the Irish-Ireland movement.

Butler’s Irish-Irelander friend believes that the woman is ‘worth enlisting’ because she is a wealthy mother of six and might be persuaded to raise her children in the Irish language. The woman, however, is ‘horrified’ at the idea of teaching her children Irish, asking Butler’s narrator ‘what is the use of being Irish?’ She continues, averring that she ‘hate[s] the language and everything else Irish.’ Butler’s narrator, not to be deterred, continues to ‘expound the gospel of the Gaelic League’ and attempts to lead the woman by example, speaking to her colleague in Irish. Once again disappointed in the lack of nationalist pride she witnesses in her fellow countrymen, Butler’s narrator blames ‘the depths of Anglicisation in which the majority of our countrypeople have sunk’.<sup>189</sup>

The article’s second section does not rely on the sentimental rhetorical devices that Butler employs in the departures scene but instead maintains a directly critical language: Butler finds the unnamed woman on the train gaudy and superficial, subject to her critique of the indifferent upper middle-class who, she believes, lack interest in the long-term cultural health of their country. The woman and her duties to Ireland

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<sup>188</sup> ‘West-Briton’ was a derogatory term for an Irish person who affiliated himself with English culture and politics. Mary E.L. Butler, ‘Musings at Cove, Cork, and Baile-Atha-Cliath’.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

come into sharper focus than the 'emigrating class': unlike the amorphous peasantry, the detailed description of the 'West-Briton' suggests that she is clearly in a position to be culturally influential. Her rejection of Ireland is couched differently from the emigrating peasants in that although the peasantry shirk their responsibility to Ireland it is because they have been led astray by Anglicisation. The upper class woman, however, refuses to teach her children Irish because of its class connotations, claiming that it is only 'the poor old countrypeople [*sic*] in the backward districts who speak the horrid thing.'<sup>190</sup> Here Butler acknowledges gentry and upper middle-class denigration of the Irish language (and, by extension, nationalist politics linked to the Irish-Ireland movement) and exposes clear class divisions between the peasantry and wealthy urbanites and the responsibilities of each. Here Butler is equally, if not more, critical of what she perceives as the wealthy and unpatriotic upper classes: though the peasantry are abandoning the land and the nationalist movement in pursuit of wealth abroad, it is (at least in this instance) as the consequence of British influence. The woman on the train, however, privileges the trappings of wealth over the nationalist struggle. This essay demonstrates the other side of Butler's desired alliance between the clergy and the upper classes: while her *Ring of Day* protagonist, Beatrice Burke, serves as an example of how the upper class ought to attend to their responsibilities toward the peasantry, Butler's woman on the train illustrates upper class indifference to the national agenda.

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<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

Other similarly-themed articles demonstrate Butler's belief that whereas peasant women's value is reflected in their ability to transmit culture within the home, upper class women's value remains tied to their ability to lead the 'emigrating class' by example. In her article 'Irish Womanhood—a Tradition and a Trust', for instance, she hopes that 'the fashionable classes' will accept 'the gospel of independent nationhood'.<sup>191</sup> In 'The Irish Gentlewoman: As She Is and As She Ought To Be', Butler stresses the importance of Irish Gentlewomen's 'studying and spreading the use of Irish, dressing in Irish manufacture, trying to foster Irish industries, and trying to hinder emigration'<sup>192</sup>—a discourse of nationalistically-motivated philanthropy that echoes Logue's points discussed in the previous chapter. With the 'West-Briton' her discussion of emigration is couched specifically in language and the Irish-Ireland movement; elsewhere it lies in the purchase of products of Irish manufacture or in the retention of servant girls eager to earn higher wages in the United States: in 'The Irish Gentlewoman' she urges 'the girls in high station' to take

the girls in lowly station by the hand, and [urge] them with the persuasiveness of a sister's pleading to stay at home in their own land, determining at the same time to do everything in their power to procure a means of livelihood [*sic*] for

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<sup>191</sup> Mary E.L. Butler, 'Irish Womanhood—a Tradition and a Trust', *the United Irishman*, 24 March 1906, pp. 2–3 (p. 3).

<sup>192</sup> Mary E.L. Butler, 'The Irish Gentlewoman: As She Is, and as She Ought to Be', *New Ireland Review*, June 1901, 221–28 (p. 223).

them, and to enable them to lead bright and busy lives at home, how different things would be.<sup>193</sup>

Here, as with previously discussed examples of upper middle-class philanthropy, Butler asserts that leading by example is means enough to stem emigration. She offers no solutions, however—merely scenes of pathos and remonstrance. Butler's peasants are silent except for their departure grief, and she never examines the actual circumstances that underpin their decisions to leave. That she mimics Catholic nationalist anti-emigration rhetoric while avoiding the complexity of the issue is evident in the fact that she condescendingly suggests that good intentions on the part of upper middle class nationalists will enable peasant women to lead 'bright and busy lives at home'. Despite the sisterly relationship she seeks to portray between women of differing classes, Butler herself demonstrates no awareness of gender politics of women's emigration. Instead, she merely creates scenes of pathos aimed to move (and motivate) upper middle-class readers while simultaneously criticizing those same readers for tendencies that militate against what she views as the national interest.

Although the literary conception of an emigrating class reflects a historical reality, it almost invariably also signals both a condescension and an indiscriminating attitude on the part of upper class authors towards their emigrant characters. Ironically, Butler will critique upper class figures for not preventing others' emigration, but her own emigration or travel abroad is not an issue.<sup>194</sup> This contradiction points up the

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<sup>193</sup> Mary E.L. Butler, 'The Irish Gentlewoman: As She Is, and as She Ought to Be', p. 225.

<sup>194</sup> Butler, incidentally, died in Rome at the age of 48.

differences in the way in which writers viewed differing narratives of emigration, agency, and responsibility along class lines. Furthermore, as will be discussed, unlike peasant women, their upper middle-class counterparts are never depicted as morally vulnerable and are therefore never subject to the same temptations while abroad. For them, travel abroad can actually be regenerative, economically and psychologically profitable, and beneficial for the home community. The following story by Katharine Tynan illustrates this double standard in that peasant women, by contrast, can only thrive—economically, socially, romantically, morally—within their home community.

The departure of the eponymous protagonist in Katharine Tynan's 1895 short story 'How Mary Came Home', while relying on many of the same standard literary tropes as Butler's peasant emigrants, illustrates instead Tynan's ambivalence with regard to women's domestic role and exposes the tension between individual desire and family responsibility. Not unimportantly, Tynan's conception of 'desire' is presented quite differently from Butler's: instead of harbouring simply materialist ambitions, Tynan's emigrant's desire is multivalent, representing physical, sexual desire as well as the desire for personal independence. However, as Tynan's literature is frequently constrained by both Catholic respectability and Victorian prudery, the subsumption of physical desire with a desire for personal independence indicates the young woman's aspiration—and eventual failure—to establish a life of her own outside the confines of her immediate family sphere, in much the same way as Catholic anti-emigration tracts.

Mary Cassidy, the 'handsomest girl of the Island' falls in love with a visiting 'Swarthy Spanish sailor' named Jacopo.<sup>195</sup> Tynan clearly indicates that the couple's courtship is short but physically passionate: '[s]o violent was the passion that flamed up between the two that there was no gainsaying it' ('Mary' 68). A hurried proposal of marriage leads her to abandon the five brothers for whom she performs a domestic role<sup>196</sup> and leave with Jacopo—not for sunny Spain—but for Glasgow. However, after a prolonged absence and diminishing correspondence with her family, one of her brothers seeks her out and finds her alone and abandoned, cradling the corpse of her infant son before the dying embers of a fire. The contrast between the way in which Tynan depicts Mary's hopeful departure and her return (with the brother and the corpse of her infant son) builds a far more intimate emigration scenario than Butler's generalised depictions of the peasantry. Furthermore, Tynan demonstrates that even a woman doing her duty in domestic terms (following her husband in marriage) might be acting unwisely with regard to her national responsibility. While Tynan demonstrates a certain degree of sympathy toward Mary's character, she also indicates that Mary is condemned for committing the 'crime' of emigration, both proving and compounding the original error of marrying outside her community (or at least beyond Irish bloodstock) in the first place.

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<sup>195</sup> Katharine Tynan, *An Isle in the Water* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1895), p. 68. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text as 'Mary'.

<sup>196</sup> White attests to the fact that, '[f]or the women whose fate was spinsterhood, there was, in most cases, no compensating personal gain. If they stayed at home, their labor [*sic*] would go to augment their brother's income as they would not be remunerated for their work.' White, p. 98.

Mary's decision to accept Jacopo's offer of marriage presents her with an escape route, which may be precisely why she did not opt for marrying a local boy: wedding a foreigner is Mary's way out of a life within a homogeneous and insular community.<sup>197</sup> Furthermore, that Jacopo arrives at the wedding with 'a bonnet and cloak for the bride such as were never dreamt of in the island', suggests that Mary might be in search of better economic circumstances through her union ('Mary' 71). At the very least, the foreigner presents Mary with social and material options which are clearly not present through a marriage to a fellow islander, allowing Tynan to comment on the sense of culpability placed upon women who choose to emigrate for financial gain. There is perhaps some implicit sense in which Tynan's story works against itself: the options at home for Mary are far from alluring, which would elicit reader empathy for her decision. At the same time, however, the costs are shown to be so great that a stoic acceptance of the meagre attractions of home are still seen to be preferable to the seductions of abroad.

The story's brief departure scene takes place mid-story (and not as a triumphant ending—as would ordinarily be the case in a novel with an upper-class protagonist) when the couple are married on the island and leave immediately afterward on the local ferry toward Jacopo's home in Glasgow. Tynan captures the reactions of her brothers at her departure:

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<sup>197</sup> Tynan even begins the story by foregrounding this sense of insularity and priority to one another over individual desires: '[t]he Island people seldom marry outside the island. They are passionately devoted to each other, but as a rule look coldly upon the stranger.' Tynan, *An Isle in the Water*, p. 67.



Five men watched her with melancholy and patient faces. [...] As the little ferry plied away from the pier it was at her husband she looked, not at them and the Island, though it stood up purple and black, and she had well loved the rocks and glades of it, and though they had fostered her. ('Mary' 72)

Tynan's language here conflates Mary's relationship with her brothers with that of the Island (a microcosm of Ireland) to illustrate Mary's eagerness, and her betrayal, in leaving both. Instead of looking back wistfully at the island and those who see her off, although 'they had fostered her', Mary focuses instead at her new husband, projecting herself into the future. Marriage, as we will see, is a frequent catalyst for emigration in these stories; however, instead of a celebratory leave-taking, Tynan creates a sense of foreboding that Mary is leaving those who do and can care for her. While similar to Butler's tearless émigrées who make 'haste to shake the dust of the shore off their feet',<sup>198</sup> Tynan's departure scene is less condemnatory in tone and therefore more sympathetic to Mary's desires. Unlike Butler's categorical refusal to depict legitimate circumstances under which women might be allowed to leave Ireland, Tynan's Mary, while again a victim of the circumstances which surround her, demonstrates a greater individual agency than Butler's peasant characters, making her a somewhat fuller representation of the difficulties and ambivalence facing emigrating women. Not unimportantly, however, Mary's pulling away from the island—even in the context of marriage—suggests an abandonment of her primary domestic responsibility: her home community.

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<sup>198</sup> Mary E.L. Butler, 'Musings at Cove, Cork, and Baile-Atha-Cliath'.

Tynan's sympathy with, and ambivalence to, the character of Mary can also be read as a parallel to Tynan's own departure from Ireland upon her marriage to Henry Hinkson, as recounted in her second volume of memoirs entitled *The Middle Years* (1917). Tynan notes that it was her father (to whom she was very close) rather than Mary's brothers who saw her off as she set sail to England. Tynan notes that, upon leaving, she was keenly aware of the weight of her decision to emigrate and to leave the security of her home behind her:

I had a sudden fear. Supposing that one were to step out of safe-keeping, away from one's own happy beliefs and faiths, into those queer places, might not harm come? [...] I watched from the boat, as long as I could see it—my sight was better then than now—my father's figure in his whitish grey overcoat. He had walked to the end of the pier to see the last of me. I often wondered afterwards how I could have left him.<sup>199</sup>

It is important to note that these reflections were made roughly twenty years into a marriage which was fraught with both domestic and economic trials, the challenges of a Catholic-Protestant union (clearly a parallel to Mary's marriage to the foreign Jacopo) and the loss of two of Tynan's children. This adaptation of her own personal history explains Tynan's desire to demonstrate to her readers the personal impact of emigration and the weight of family duty (family to both her new husband and to the father she watched upon leaving) in the face of personal desire. It also pulls against the

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<sup>199</sup> Katharine Tynan, *The Middle Years* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1917), pp. 96–97 <<http://www.archive.org/stream/middleyears00tynagoog#page/n6/mode/2up>> [accessed 2 August 2011].

idea of double standards with regard to the different treatment of upper middle-class emigration—here Tynan demonstrates the similar feelings, choices, and sense of responsibility in the case of peasant and middle-class emigrants.

As briefly noted earlier, perhaps the most famous departure narrative of the period—James Joyce’s short story ‘Eveline’—was published in 1904, the same year as Butler’s ‘Musings’ article. Joyce’s story employs and subverts many of the same tropes employed by the two aforementioned authors, here emphasising the paralytic weight of family duty. ‘Mary’ and ‘Eveline’ present quite similar scenarios at the outset, as both are presented with a less-than-perfect escape route; in the end, both women choose the lesser of two evils, though a different choice. Joyce’s eponymous protagonist Eveline Hill, faced with ‘a young woman’s choice between home and abroad, entrapment and escape, duty and love’,<sup>200</sup> proves at the moment of departure (unlike Tynan’s Mary) unable to free herself from her oppressive home life. Much ink has been spilt on her paralysis on the quay and her inability to ‘escape’ both her home and Catholic Ireland. Despite the fact that she hopes her beau, Frank, will ‘save her’, he leaves for the exotic destination of Argentina without her—due, at least in part, to her sense of helplessness and ambivalence, as well as her sense of responsibility with regard to her mother’s dying wish that she ‘keep the home together’.<sup>201</sup> O’Brien underscores the gender politics in Frank’s departure without her, underscoring Eveline’s passivity and asserting that while Frank ‘has the ability, through his gender sanctioned role, to escape from colonial

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<sup>200</sup> Mullin, *James Joyce, Sexuality and Social Purity*, p. 56.

<sup>201</sup> James Joyce, *Dubliners*, the Viking Critical Library (New York: Penguin Books, 1996), p. 40.

Ireland, [Eveline's] only "escape" is to go to the Saturday evening market to buy food for the family, having managed to wring some of her own money back from an increasingly abusive father.'<sup>202</sup>

Joyce's choice of subject matter and the language with which to depict it (his employment and subversion of the common language of pathos around emigration, including the boat's 'mournful whistle', Eveline's 'silent fervent prayer', her 'cry of anguish' among the other passengers—here applied to a young woman who chooses *not* to emigrate) contradicted an on-going dialogue in the press against emigration and 'challenged the work of Joyce's [Revivalist] compatriots' who propounded the twin tropes of 'Holy Ireland' and its dangerous exterior.<sup>203</sup> However, instead of a cautionary tale about the consequence of leaving, Joyce tells one about the consequences of staying: while Mary's eager departure with Jacopo will eventually lead to her sense of isolation and personal failure, Eveline lacks the courage to make a decision at all and will instead remain home, it is suggested, where she will suffer the abuses of her family while at the same time suffering under the weight of duty. While the narratives pull in antithetical directions on this issue, home remains a dismal place for both women.

The language of pathos illustrated by the excerpts discussed in this section addresses with the weight of the emigrant's decision, her degree of agency, and the effect that her decision will inevitably have on those she leaves behind. While most politically-oriented accounts focus primarily on cultural dispossession and the damage

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<sup>202</sup> Eugene O'Brien, "'Because She Was a Girl'" Gender Identity and the Postcolonial in James Joyce's "Eveline", *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, 93 (2004), 201–15 (p. 206).

<sup>203</sup> Joyce, *Dubliners*, pp. 40–41; Ellmann, p. 164.

done to those who remain, later writers like Tynan and Joyce focus—though in opposite ways—on how the desire to emigrate affects the individual, employing the same techniques as more politically-oriented writers to create scenes of pathos, but to a more ambiguous end.

### **Destinations**

Katherine Tynan's 1912 novel *The French Wife* features an interesting variation on this theme of the dangers surrounding peasant emigration. While Tynan's peasant characters remain subject to the dangers of the foreign city, her upper middle-class characters are able to leave Ireland and reap great personal and material profit from their experience abroad. Such a stark contrast in her treatment of the two classes with regard to individual experience reveals Tynan's own desire to employ the trope of the dangerous city landscape as an anti-emigration intervention only when concerning the rural peasantry. Through the creation of story lines that pose diametrically opposite experiences in terms of personal fortune and physical and moral danger, Tynan suggests that the upper class are impervious to perils encountered abroad while the peasantry require the protection of community and the proximity to familiar religious counsel in order to ensure their own safety.

While discussing the peasant girl Kitty Donegan's decision to leave home (as addressed previously), the middle-class protagonist of Tynan's novel, Alison Barnard, observes that Mrs Donegan and her daughter occupy a 'green, quiet corner of the glen where the primitive values [flourish]' (*FW* 36). While Tynan neglects to explain the exact nature of these primitive values, she clearly ties them with Ireland's peasantry and with

the rural landscape, demonstrating what T.F. referred to earlier as the ‘nobleness of the genuine Irish peasant’. By participating in what Hirsch refers to as the ‘paganizing of the peasant’,<sup>204</sup> Tynan confirms her role in the Revival where, for the Catholic middle-class, ‘the Irish country person functioned as a particularly important autochthonous myth, the sources of all authentic Irish life.’<sup>205</sup> This link established between the peasant and the landscape proved to be a central component for stories written by Anglo-Irish writers: Tynan’s Mary—an islander—has a ‘face the colour of the sea-shell’ (‘Mary’ 68); Alison observes that Kitty Donegan always had the air of a ‘startled fawn’ (FW 36). These comparisons reduce the peasant to either an animal or an inanimate object, rendering them passive, silent, and Arcadian. Thus, the condescension with which Tynan depicts the peasantry is illustrative of her desire to act as a sort of cultural tour guide for English middle-class readers in an era of political tension.

Alison Barnard’s neighbour, Sir Gerard Molyneux, in contrast to Kitty Donegan, has made a fortune in California’s fruit industry and, ‘happy enough where he was’, has no plans to leave the United States and return to Ireland until he learns that he has inherited the family estate (FW 17). Through his experience travelling through the ‘congested great cities of America’, however, he

had come in contact with much human misery, and had learned to appreciate the thing that emigration means to the Irish peasant. He found so many of them who had been cleared out of their peaceful valleys from off their clean, wind-

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<sup>204</sup> E. Hirsch, ‘The Imaginary Irish Peasant’, *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 106 (1991), 1116–33 (p. 1125).

<sup>205</sup> Hirsch, p. 1125.

swept hills, huddled in the high, sky-scraping tenements which in summer or in winter alike were an inferno. (FW 17)

While contemporary rural Ireland was neither peaceful nor clean, Tynan's use of the term 'inferno' suggests not only a hellish existence endured by peasant emigrants abroad (a metaphor which she continues below), but also that the urban landscape is so divorced from nature that seasons cease to exist. The unchanging heat of these tenements contrasts vividly with the green glen of Kitty's home evoked earlier.

Through Molyneux, Tynan details an anti-emigration scenario strikingly similar to other Catholic and nationalist anti-emigration journalism which links emigration with victimization (the peasants 'having been cleared out') and suffering once away from any geographic protection offered by 'Holy Ireland'. Nora Degidon's article 'The Lives of Emigrants', for example, cites 'maidens on the move westwards' who are 'lured away by the bright pictures' only to 'turn to vice and sin.'<sup>206</sup> The *Southern Star* asserts that the thousands of young emigrants leave the 'healthy atmosphere of their homes in Ireland' under the 'fascination of the allurements of [...] the El Darado [*sic*] across the Atlantic', to finish either 'starving or dying of consumption in the slums or basements of American cities.'<sup>207</sup> The lexis here underscores the contrast between bucolic 'healthy' Ireland and the enticements that lead to physical and moral sickness.

Relating to these descriptions of self-indulgence and moral turpitude, Molyneux declares that while abroad he witnessed Irish peasant children

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<sup>206</sup> Nora Degidon, 'The Lives of Emigrants', *the United Irishman*, 17 January 1903, p. 6.

<sup>207</sup> 'Stay at Home!', *the Southern Star*, 29 August 1903, p. 4.

dying like flies, themselves familiarized with vice and crime, forgetting their religion, and contemptuous of their old ideals, the one saving grace left to them the desire to return to the old country. (*FW* 17)

These images reveal Molyneux's (and, more importantly, Tynan's) class condescension, seeing the peasantry as a mass and, if they do turn to vice, as parasites. Molyneux is not without pity, however, as these images have motivated him to campaign for anti-emigration legislation back in Ireland, but they also lay bare a clear distinction between the ways in which emigration serves the upper middle-class and the peasantry. Tynan, like Butler (and the excerpts above), employs emigration to the United States in general as an indicator of a dangerous materialism that leads to physical and spiritual decay, though without any actual detail as to where and how these dangers might present themselves. Unlike Butler, however, by contrasting Molyneux's experience with that of the Irish peasantry, Tynan creates a double standard where the expanses of North America are indeed the land of opportunity for upper middle-class figures (like Mulholland's 1896 novel *A Fair Emigrant* or 1905's *A Girl's Ideal*—both to be discussed in later chapters). Furthermore, while Molyneux finds both happiness and wealth in America's countryside ('[h]e had been happy there and had dreamed dreams. He had desired riches and had seen them coming to him'), the peasantry—an undifferentiated mass—never rise above the American slums (*FW* 17). Molyneux's ability to encounter and to profit from these bucolic locations where, for instance, his orange groves are filled with 'globes of gold', only further establishes the duality between the upper classes who have access to wholesome countryside outside of Ireland and the peasants



who are destined to suffer the horrors of the urban landscape (*FW* 17). This again underscores the ideological link made in anti-emigration discourse between the peasantry and nature, and their inadaptability when separated from it.

Nonetheless—and crucially to Tynan’s purpose—upon witnessing the suffering of the Irish emigrants in the urban United States, Molyneux returns to Ireland with a mission to save the Irish peasantry from emigration and ‘the ill-directed, ill-informed philanthropy’ behind it (*FW* 18). Here Tynan gives a brief acknowledgement to upper middle-class pro-emigrationists who encourage and even, in some instances, fund the emigration of their tenants. She echoes the sentiments of anti-emigrationist Michael Davitt who insisted that ‘[u]nder the cloak of philanthropy, certain persons are constantly and insidiously inducing young girls to emigrate’.<sup>208</sup> Being more invested in the literary quality of her work rather than its employment as a mere vehicle for political didacticism, these sorts of historically relevant and politically-charged references are rare (echoed briefly in her short story ‘A Returned Emigrant’). They do, however, shed light on Tynan’s beliefs, like Butler’s, regarding the upper middle-class’s responsibility to protect the peasantry by keeping them in Ireland. When discussing Ireland’s congested districts with other members of his class, for instance, Molyneux details what he believes is the alternative for peasants abroad: ‘the congestion of a New York block of dwellings, thirteen stories or so in the air!’ (*FW* 19). The peasants, he insists ‘had better starve here. There the congestion is—the congestion of hell’ (*FW* 19). His statement is

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<sup>208</sup> Michael Davitt, ‘How Irish Emigrant Girls Fare in America’, *the Freeman’s Journal* (Dublin, 25 June 1888), p. 6.

very much akin to Butler and Mulholland's anti-emigration invocations celebrating collective suffering *sur place* rather than abroad as a way to nationalist redemption—hence the same phrase is uttered, almost verbatim, by Father Columba to Norah in *Norah of Waterford*. Couched in Molyneux's speech is the suggestion that America is infernally hot in comparison to the 'green, quiet corner of the glen' referred to above, underscoring the peaceful, even contemplative qualities of the Irish countryside that do not exist elsewhere and will inevitably be lost to the emigrant upon departure.

Molyneux insists that his mission is to assist the peasantry through anti-emigrationism so as to 'keep them in their glens and their mountains, on their fertile plains, to enable them to live where God has placed them' (FW 19). Here Tynan combines several problematic aspects of anti-emigration discourse: first, she contrasts country with city rather than city with city, thereby resisting potential comparisons between America's slums and Dublin's slums (unlike Rosa Mulholland, whose more realistic works, like 1899's *Nanno* or *The Tragedy of Chris*, were far more engaged with the actual sufferings of Dublin's urban poor). Second, Molyneux's role in the novel's narrative underscores the passivity of the Irish peasant who requires saving. This theme is frequently employed by both Catholic and nationalist anti-emigration writers like Butler's discourse earlier in the chapter. Third, Tynan invokes the divine destiny of the Irish peasant to remain where she is geographically situated, underscoring the ways in which Ireland's (rural) geography preserves the peasant character. This link between land and peasant is an essential element of the fictional adaptation of the anti-emigration narrative so often seen in Catholic and nationalist press.

Within the context of Molyneux's crusade to prevent peasant emigration, Tynan includes a few brief mentions of popular urban destinations for Irish peasants: Molyneux's upper class neighbour, for instance, laments that the country is 'emptying itself every year into the slums of America and Glasgow and Liverpool' (FW 20). America, additionally, is most often simply referred to in conjunction with its 'congested great cities'; the only two cities named being New York and Chicago, which offer 'towering tenements' (FW 17, 35). While these destinations are all historically plausible, and presumably are intended to provide a certain measure of verisimilitude to her story, they are revealed without any detail or characteristic differentiating one from another, which suggests that Tynan is attempting to create a portrait of an unwholesome and destructive existence *anywhere* outside Ireland. In using these vague and portentous references, Tynan conflates these destinations and the emigrant experience they offer.

### **Creating Ireland away**

Katharine Tynan's short stories 'A Returned Emigrant' (1899) and 'A Benefactor' (1902) detail the theme of the emigrant's attempt at the recreation of Ireland as a means to construct a safe haven from the moral and physical dangers of life abroad. The backstories supporting 'A Benefactor's' protagonist, Susy Donovan, and 'A Returned Emigrant's' secondary female character Mrs Nolan mirror one another, depicting a similar type: a displaced emigrant woman in a hostile environment, struggling to establish and maintain a home away from home. In these stories, the recreation of a facsimile of Ireland outside of the country contributes to the stories' anti-emigration message. Here Tynan's discourse takes two tacks: first, it details the dangers of the

foreign urban centre (in this case Liverpool) as compared to the serenity and regenerative powers of 'Holy Ireland'. Second, it explores the ways in which the protagonists attempt to recreate Ireland so as to shield themselves from the moral depravity of the English city. In this way, Tynan once again reinforces the link between the peasant female and the land, highlighting the notion that her safety and identity rely on it. For, although the peasant emigrant may survive while away from Ireland, the only way she will actually thrive is within its borders.

In 'A Returned Emigrant', Mrs Nolan, the widow of a Liverpool watchman, lives inside the docks in a caretaker's cottage with her fourteen year old son Joe and 'three or four little ones'.<sup>209</sup> Though poor, the family are purportedly 'content with their lot': Tynan informs her readers that Mrs Nolan—'a simple Irish peasant'—is happy to eke out a living through 'little jobs of washing and sewing for the men', and that her children are 'wise and careful' and 'old-fashioned [...] with no taste for adventure' ('RE' 149-151). Here, Tynan reveals both her class bias and her political bent through the creation of empathetic peasant characters who are comfortable with their place within the class hierarchy. Their simplicity simultaneously assures Tynan's British readers of the family's hard-working virtuousness and, through them, equates the Irish peasantry with non-materialism and piety, echoing Church discourse.

As a Mother Ireland figure, Mrs Nolan's 'almost childish innocence' and her devoutness are emphasised by Tynan: for instance, she is 'horried at the speech and

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<sup>209</sup> Katharine Tynan, *The Land I Love Best* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1899), p. 149. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text as 'RE'.

behaviour of the women she met with after she had married and come to Liverpool', and has taken pains to sequester herself from the world outside the docks, demonstrating her virtue ('RE' 149-150). Furthermore, her comportment engenders respect from the men for whom she works within the dockside, suggesting that the confines of her invented Ireland have preserved her purity. Within the story, Mrs Nolan's moral character serves two central purposes: first, demonstrating, as a Mother Ireland archetype, the indisputable moral virtue of the Irish peasant emigrant woman; and second, proving to Tynan's readers that Mrs Nolan, and by extension, those among the Irish peasantry who behave suitably, is deserving of the good fortune which will befall her.

Following the death of her husband, Mrs Nolan retreats to the cottage which the docks management has provided for the family, viewing it as a 'haven of refuge', providing 'safety from sin and shame' ('RE' 150). Presuming that Tynan's English audience would have been familiar with Liverpool as an enclave for Irish emigrants, it would have been a logical choice of setting for Tynan to depict an emigrant woman endeavouring to preserve her ideological priorities abroad. Throughout the story, Tynan's regular inclusion of details such as Mrs Nolan's singing of Moore's Melodies and 'The Wearing of the Green', along with the arrival of the family priest, Father O'Sullivan, illustrate the cultural microcosm ostensibly created and maintained by Irish emigrant women through the retention of stereotypical symbols of 'Irishness'. Tynan herself was most likely drawing on contemporary literary trends: P.D. Murphy's story 'The Intending Emigrant', for example, notes how the departing emigrant takes 'some little keepsake, a

block of peat, a box of earth from the garden, or a spring from the tree outside the door', once again tying the peasant to the land and detailing the attempted transferability of Ireland through cultural objects.<sup>210</sup> Tynan most likely drew as well from her own experience with Irish diasporic culture: Bronwen Walter's study, 'Gendered Irishness in Britain', notes that Irish women generally sought to recreate Ireland when living in England, particularly defining their Irishness through the Church.<sup>211</sup> The social isolation Tynan suggests, however, contradicts the historical reality of chain migration: Liverpool, as discussed above, was a primary destination for Irish emigrants and held a large Irish population with attendant culture, so its choice as setting actually undermines the contrast Tynan was attempting to establish between Ireland and England.

The 'cottage', itself a form of architecture with a rural connotation, serves to concretize rural Ireland while sitting on the city's docks. Its placement—as far west as possible—suggests a territorial no-man's-land at a remove from the city itself. We are told, furthermore, that the cottage features Mrs Nolan's most valued accoutrements of her religion, such as a 'crucifix, a statue of the Holy Virgin, and her holy-water font,' all of which are meant to help her to feel 'as if she were in Ireland again' ('RE' 151). The inclusion of Catholic artefacts underscores the devoutness of the Irish peasant in the face of seemingly overwhelming moral opposition from the exterior. Without signalling the specific details of her origins in Ireland, Tynan's metonymic representations of

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<sup>210</sup> P.D. Murphy, 'The Intending Emigrant', *Ireland's Own*, 29 (1917), 343.

<sup>211</sup> Walter, 'Gendered Irishness in Britain: Changing Constructions', p. 87.

Catholic religious artefacts evoke for the reader a protective armoury derived from an Irish background which implicitly holds off the influence of English moral laxness. Another example of the talismanic power of religious artefacts for the Irish diaspora can be seen in Tynan's story 'A Strayed Innocent', where she identifies an Irish neighbourhood in London through 'the stalls containing gaudy-coloured pictures of the Sacred Heart and the Blessed Virgin and the Saints, side by side with oleographs of Robert Emmet in the dock, of Dan O'Connell and Parnell and John Redmond'.<sup>212</sup> Here again physical objects fortify Irish identity with both religious and political iconography. By including these items—rather than giving any other physical description of the cottage itself (or of the unspecified moral dangers Mrs Nolan seeks to avoid)—Tynan suggests that Mrs Nolan, despite her years of emigration, remains emotionally and morally tied to Ireland, seeking to replicate a sort of sacred moral purity that cannot be found elsewhere.

The returned emigrant of the title—the elderly Mary Cassidy—is on her way back to Ireland when her ship is caught in a storm and docks in Liverpool. Mrs Nolan's eldest son finds her after she faints on the docks and invites her to stay with them, insisting that they are 'Irish like yourself, an' you'll be safe with us [...] an' it's more than you'd be maybe outside the dock gates' ('RE' 148). This exchange underscores the idea that the Nolan family domain is an Ireland away from Ireland, in the safety of which Mary can feel both at home and protected from the dangers of the foreign urban sphere. Mrs

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<sup>212</sup> Katharine Tynan, *Countrymen All* (London: Mausel and Co, 1915), p. 234  
 <[http://ia700307.us.archive.org/15/items/countrymenall00tyna/countrymenall00tyna\\_bw.pdf](http://ia700307.us.archive.org/15/items/countrymenall00tyna/countrymenall00tyna_bw.pdf)>  
 [accessed 28 March 2013].

Nolan invites her to remain with the family until she is well enough to travel, invoking the image of 'the night the Mother of God was refused a shelter at all the inns of Bethlehem' ('RE' 154). Mary notes upon entering their home both the cleanliness of the cottage and that its religious emblems recall the village from which she herself emigrated fifty years earlier. As a camaraderie develops immediately between the women, Mrs Nolan discloses to Mary her fears of Liverpool and how the sinful urban culture might corrupt her children:

I can't always hope to keep them inside the dock gates, and there's worse things in the streets outside than the big black rats that come out in the warehouses after dark. It's hard for boys to keep straight, so it is; and I've seen as innocent mothers' sons as ever my little boys were, goin' to shame and sin in Liverpool.  
( 'RE' 157)

The dock gates, then, prove a sort of geographical and moral barrier inside of which exists an impenetrable cultural and religious encomium to rural Irish purity and beyond which Tynan suggests overwhelming temptation which Mrs Nolan's innocent family are not equipped to fight.

That Mrs Nolan created a haven on the docks merely reinforces the idea that, lacking the upper class's cultural savvy, the safest place for the Irish peasantry is in rural Ireland, and the next best thing the closest possible geographical location. 'A Returned Emigrant'—published by the Catholic Truth Society—supports the Church's anti-emigration discourse by integrating religious reference and language and in creating and



reaffirming the idea that Ireland's exterior is inherently dangerous. It also suggests the benefits of Christian charity: as Mary Cassidy eventually passes away in the Nolan's dockside cottage, the family inherit what is revealed to be a considerable fortune, and are able to return to the aptly-named Irish town of 'Moneymore'. Although Tynan's tale was more geared toward entertaining her readers through quaint portraits of the peasantry than in propounding a specific ideology (unlike Butler, whose peasant characters never achieve this level of development), this creation of Ireland away from Ireland demonstrates Tynan's investment in supporting a Catholic nationalist moral agenda that women must barricade themselves within a poor imitation of Ireland until and if they are able to return.

Tynan's 1902 collection *The Handsome Quaker* includes a story which serves as a diptych alongside 1899's 'A Returned Emigrant'. 'A Benefactor' extracts essential details from the Nolan family tale and recreates this family as the Donovans, building on a series of similar themes, particularly with regard to the reinvention of Ireland. This time, however, it is Susy Donovan who leaves her Irish 'mountain glen' in order to follow her husband to the Liverpool docks, a detail which establishes Susy as a sympathetic character, as she has dutifully emigrated within the context of marriage.<sup>213</sup> This placement also allows Tynan to revisit the city-versus-country dynamic, now focusing on the symbiotic relationship between the noble Irish peasant tenantry and the benevolent landlord figure and establishing a causal relation between geography and redemption.

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<sup>213</sup> Katharine Tynan, *The Handsome Quaker and Other Stories* (London: A. H. Bullen, 1902), p. 160. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text as 'AB'.

After the death of her dockworker husband, Susy and her four children are allowed, by the 'grace of the directors', to remain in their allotted cottage within the dock gates ('AB' 159). Like Mrs Nolan, Susy's home on the water is an oasis from the rest of the city, out of reach of the 'human rats of the sewers outside' ('AB' 160). This time, however, Tynan places a greater emphasis (though no greater detail) on the temptations which lay just beyond the gates, using highly evocative language to build a striking contrast between it and the Donovan's cottage-as-Ireland:

Outside the dock-walls was the great evil, prowling city. Around the docks was a labyrinth of wicked streets, given over to such sins as Susy only vaguely guessed at. At night, when the dock-gates were shut, beasts of prey roamed under cover of darkness. Murder was not uncommon. Screams and foul oaths and blows and evil language went on all night. A very city of the plains it seemed to Susy; and she was wont to wonder at the clemency of an offended God who did not purge the place with fire. ('AB' 159)

The passage's macabre language and tone, as well as the inclusion of details equating Liverpool with a modern Sodom and Gomorrah, indicates the degree to which Tynan participates in the anti-emigration efforts that employ religious language in the context of the pious Irish peasant; other contemporary descriptions published by the Church equate American city life, for example, with 'Babylon and Ancient Rome'.<sup>214</sup> In so doing, Tynan creates a clear demarcation between the moral Irish oasis that Susy Donovan is

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<sup>214</sup> Schrier, p. 66; Mulholland, *The Tragedy of Chris*, p. 261.

attempting to preserve within the confines of the docks—the ‘little sacred circle of herself and her children’—and the moral decay of the urban exterior (‘AB’ 162, 161).

Susy, who is ‘as scared of the world outside as a hare’, remains within the dock walls ‘[e]xcept to attend the church and do a little hasty marketing’ and lives in fear of Liverpool’s unnamed ‘beasts of prey’, remaining ever vigilant against their intrusion into the geographic perimeters of her carefully-constructed enclave (‘AB’ 159-161). As previously addressed, Tynan’s emphasis on the peasant’s relationship with the land is evident through the language which portrays Susy as both vulnerable and displaced within urban Liverpool. As the ‘hare’, Susy is reduced to the status of a defenceless, mute animal, astray within an urban setting, attempting to keep ‘the wolf from the door’ (‘AB’ 158). However cherished a home, the location of her house in the foreign city renders her permanently under siege. Furthermore, as if to underscore her passivity, Tynan tells us that although she is a ‘pretty little woman [who] might have had her choice of husbands since Pat’s death’, Susy is ‘scared’ of any attentions that men pay to her and considers the idea of re-marriage a ‘profanation’ to the memory of her husband (‘AB’ 161). Not at all ‘worldly-wise’, Tynan suggests that Susy’s safety depends on her rural Ireland-away-from-Ireland, her only contact with urban Liverpool in the form of the Catholic Church.

In her article entitled ‘Defining Womanhood: Irish Women and the Catholic Church in Victorian Liverpool’, Martha Kanya-Forstner notes that ‘In Victorian Liverpool, the Catholic Church played a prominent role in defining and reinforcing the

distinctiveness of Irish Catholics in the city',<sup>215</sup> underscoring the idea that identity was based on both religious and cultural practices, a theory which corresponds to Tynan's use of Catholic symbols within her fictional accounts of Irish emigrants abroad. Susy Donovan conforms to the Victorian ideal of the deserving poor, because of her contentment with her place within the class hierarchy and to her strict adherence to the Irish Catholic moral code. However, Kanya-Forstner finds that Irish emigrant women like Susy were not isolated; instead, the urban poor were pursued and, at least to some extent, looked after by Catholic charities and philanthropic organisations, which exercised considerable religious and social influence within Liverpool parishes.

As Susy Donovan prays that her family will somehow find the means to return to rural Ireland, Tynan underscores her protagonist's fear that her children will fall victim to the material temptations of the Liverpool streets—temptations that do not exist in the Irish countryside. As it is, as long as her children remain within the gates, they remain 'round-limbed, strong, healthy babies, the pure peasant blood showing in their clear skin and rosy cheeks, the clean and innocent life within the dock-walls leaving their eyes without a stain', a description of rude vitality usually reserved in such works for the health-giving properties of residence in Ireland itself ('AB' 162). Instead, ill-equipped to face the lure of urban Liverpool, the children have remained ensconced within Susy's recreated Ireland, which serves—at least for the time being—as a sufficient substitute.

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<sup>215</sup> Martha Kanya-Forstner, 'Defining Womanhood: Irish Women and the Catholic Church in Victorian Liverpool', *Immigrants & Minorities*, 18 (1999), 168–88 (p. 168).

The cottage itself draws 'the directors' benevolent smiles' and is 'shown to visitors when they are brought round the docks': a project taken on by Susy's late husband, Patrick, the exterior is decorated with 'shell-work in many quaint designs' and bits of coral brought back by sailors returning from foreign travel ('AB' 160). More than a caretaker's lodging, the cottage takes on an aura both of an exotic curiosity, like the rural Irish peasants themselves, and a repository for sailors' souvenirs upon their return. Additionally, a 'mosaic of stones and shells made a little garden before the door where nothing tenderer would grow,' suggesting that, despite this collective effort to improve their environs, the very earth in Liverpool is barren ('AB' 160). This picturesque image suggests a cottage 'garden' which is made of fragments of other destinations, pieced together in a superficial mosaic, lacking roots. This rootlessness parallels the Irish emigrants themselves who, displaced and on show, are attempting to grow in inhospitable soil.

The cottage's interior is witnessed through the eyes of the benefactor himself, Mr John Adair, the 'merciful' Anglo-Irish chairman of the company through whose benevolence the family has been allowed to remain ('AB' 164). Escorted by Susy's son Terry, Adair takes shelter there when caught in a sudden storm. Upon entering, he notes that the Donovan home bears a strong resemblance to 'those tiny white-washed cottages' he has seen when visiting his tenants in rural Ireland. Warmed by 'a bright little fire', he observes that the cottage walls are decorated with 'highly-coloured pictures of saints [and] Irish patriots', as well as a 'little garish altar [...] with artificial flowers in cheap vases' and 'candles half-burnt through', again identifying the

accoutrements of religion and national sentiment, reaffirming the image of the devout Catholic nationalist peasant, but also suggesting that religious observance has a 'garish' and thus superficial aspect to it ('AB' 170). Tynan's narrative—and her continuing encomia to the magical health-giving properties of the Irish landscape (which she repeatedly equates to a 'Fairylane')—indicate that these artefacts, and the setting in which they are contained, can be found only within Ireland or within the confines of an Ireland created and carefully preserved from the exterior by devoted emigrants ('AB' 167). The elements of this simulacrum of Ireland, however, betray its otherness and superficiality, and their ability to protect the emigrants is limited. In order to achieve genuine redemption, the peasants are obligated to return to their homeland which is endowed with the power to 'bring the dead to life' ('AB' 177).

During his conversation with Susy's son Terry, Adair discloses that he himself has a sickly son who fails to thrive in the city, despite the abundant material comforts that surround him:

He has soft carpets to walk on, and flowers in the winter, and great fires, [and] toys and books by the hundred, but he doesn't care for any of them. His father would give him the heart out of his breast; but it is all the same. This little boy is never well; perhaps he never will be. ('AB' 175)

Terry, in response, tells the stranger that 'God can make him strong if the doctors can't' and suggests that he bring his son to Ireland where the spiritually and materially pure countryside is endowed with 'life-giving air' ('AB' 175, 181). Wholesome rural Ireland

contributes not only to the well-being of the Irish peasant, but also serves as a place of pilgrimage for the English who have lost their priorities in the pursuit of wealth. Tynan's statement regarding the physical and ethical unfitness of English materialism in the face of Irish spiritual detachment (Susy's children, by contrast, thrive on a meagre diet consisting mostly of 'stirabout' and potatoes) opens up one of the story's central themes: the symbiotic relationship between the Irish peasantry and the Anglo-Irish upper middle-class ('AB' 170). In conflating the peasant character with an idealized rural landscape, Tynan, like Butler, constructs a romantic mythologised peasant character who, with the aid of Ireland's mystical healing powers, can lead the upper classes to alter their values. What those priorities are, however, differs according to the author's political motivations: for Butler, the peasant-as-Ireland can lead the upper classes to nationalist responsibility; for Tynan, Susy can lead them to physical and spiritual health. In both cases, the upper class, through their material advantage, can help the emigrant by bringing or keeping her home.

Within ten days of Terry's conversation with Mr Adair, Suzy Donovan and her children are relocated to Ireland ('the isle of their dreams') by the anonymous benefactor and established on a small farm ('AB' 179). Soon thereafter, Adair returns to his family's long-vacant shooting lodge in the same village and reveals himself to the Donovans as their benefactor. That he should return to Ireland after an extended hiatus confirms Adair's status as a British absentee landlord, but he is nonetheless a positively portrayed and sympathetic character (unlike the absentee landlords to be discussed in Chapter five). Adair's generosity with the Donovans is repaid not only through the

eventual physical healing of his son, but also through his own ideological redemption. Returning to Ireland has steered Adair away from material concerns engendered by his time in England; he tells Terry, for instance, that he ‘has often forgotten how to pray for himself’, learning through his observation of the Donovans the importance of focusing on family and religion (‘AB’ 174).

Tynan’s ending allows for a depiction of the Irish—even those Anglo-Irish who have been lost to the materialism of the city—to return home to a sort of holy site where illnesses are healed and friendships and family life are nurtured. It also allows for the successful relationship between the Adairs and the Donovans: through this discourse and that of the *French Wife* Tynan, unlike Butler, conveys a message that the possibility for constructive and mutually-beneficial relations exists between Anglo-Irish landlords and the Irish peasantry. It also intimates, like much of Rosa Mulholland’s work (*Marcella Grace* and *Father Tim*, and *Nanno*, for instance), that Irish peasants gratefully and contentedly assume their proper place among their social betters, even when returning under ideal circumstances to their rural home.<sup>216</sup> Susy is rewarded for her steadfastness and religious observance (she and the children had regularly prayed for Adair in their dockside cottage) and her passive appreciation of Adair’s benevolence; Tynan’s message through Susy serves to underscore her message to readers both about the wholesome piety of the Irish female and about the ‘straight, dignified peasants’ as a

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<sup>216</sup> In addition to Tynan’s overarching theme of the pure peasant and the jaded wealthy Anglo-Irish landlord, she also emphasises the idea that the poor know—and are comfortable in—their place: after Adair leaves the Donovan cottage and Terry recounts Adair’s visit, Suzy is ‘a little disturbed at hearing how much of their own aspirations Terry had imparted to the visitor, lest Terry be considered a “terrible bowld boy” for making so free with the names of great people’ Tynan, *The Handsome Quaker and Other Stories*, p. 178.



class ('AB' 164). Importantly, while at the end of Tynan's stories the peasants are ostensibly better off upon their return to 'Holy Ireland' and Mrs Nolan's children are able to attend Catholic school (ensuring their moral rectitude), 'The Benefactor's' emphasis is on the ameliorated well-being of the upper middle-class characters, underscoring Tynan's larger messages that the magical restorative powers of Ireland can aid the social ills of absentee landlordism and reinforce constructive relations between classes.

### **Conclusion**

Despite the fact that the authors discussed in this chapter consistently borrow much of the same sentimental and cautionary language as that found in Catholic anti-emigration propaganda, the purpose behind their use varies along the lines of each author's political ideology and artistic ethos. The peasant departure proved for both Butler and Tynan an excellent vehicle for a politically-based discussion about personal and national duty. However, the nuances of their differing views on nationalism are evident in their treatment of individual characters around those departures, particularly with regard to the degree to which each author acknowledges the emigrant's personal circumstances and agency. The creation of Ireland abroad and the juxtaposition between city and country, while lacking in historical authenticity, enable both Butler and Tynan to employ the 'Holy Ireland' trope to underpin each author's distinct nationalist philosophy. While Mary Butler's scenes of departure employ pathos as a way into a politically-based discussion about middle-class responsibility, Katharine Tynan's creation of a safe and

restorative Ireland models Revivalist literary tropes while simultaneously allowing her to support a Catholic anti-emigration agenda.

The next chapter will consider the ways in which the authors studied alter traditional tropes of return in the context of the emigration narrative, focusing in particular on short stories by Mary Butler and Katharine Tynan, and on Rosa Mulholland's long fiction. For, while the peasant emigrant ostensibly suffers from isolation while away from rural Ireland, the peasant returnee risks isolation when coming back to her home community.

### Chapter Three: The Nostos Narrative and Treatments of Return

Narratives of departure customarily end either in tragedy (like Mary Cassidy's death in Liverpool) or triumph (like Susy Donovan's return to Ireland). From within the context of anti-emigration fiction, however, the figure of the returnee is often complicated, as the physical destination of Ireland holds great significance within Catholic and nationalist discourse. If the returning emigrant perishes abroad, she disappoints an actual return to Irish soil and community (as is the case with Mary Cassidy). A return to Irish soil itself, however, can result positively or negatively, depending on the socioeconomic status of the protagonist and the message which the author seeks to convey through the returnee character.

This chapter examines the adaptation of the homecoming motif in anti-emigration literature by Katharine Tynan, Rosa Mulholland, and Geraldine Cummins. The motif of return—or *nostos*, most famously used in Homer's *Odyssey*—figures prominently in the works under discussion. As employed in the Greek epic tradition, *nostos* details the return (whether triumphant, as with Odysseus, or indeed catastrophic, as with Agamemnon) of a typically male hero to his homeland and waiting female mate. Given Ireland's history of exodus, it naturally follows that the themes of emigration, nostalgia, and return should also be archetypes of the Irish literary canon, regardless of historical period or larger sociopolitical import. Discussed perhaps most notably in the Nostos section of Joyce's mock-epic *Ulysses*, but also in lesser-known works throughout the twentieth century, the Irish return often conveys social critique,

as Heidi Hansson observes, as returnees 'are able to look with fresh eyes at stale conventions and narrow-minded attitudes.'<sup>217</sup> The return can also, however (as we will see below) serve as a way to critique the returnee herself and the experience of return—and by extension the emigrant and emigration—through condemnatory depiction and cautionary language. In choosing to depict not the returnee's victorious homecoming (following the themes of Odysseus in the Greek *Nostoi* Epic, or the Biblical tale of the Prodigal Son) but instead his—or in this case, her—inability to reintegrate into the community, the authors are able to disturb the usual *nostos* themes to serve a larger anti-emigration message.

The authors discussed in this chapter do not employ the *locus classicus* of return in its entirety; instead they implement a few readily recognizable elements which underpin the motif generally, among them nostalgia and *nostos-anagnorisis*, or the test of homecoming-recognition (where the waiting person tests the returnee in order to verify his identity). More centrally, however, the works in question, while employing these standard aspects of the *nostos* narrative, alter the myth of the returning exile by altering the traditional gender dynamic upon which it rests. With precious few exceptions, the female quest hero exists neither in the literary canon nor in our readerly expectations. To paraphrase Hansson, unlike the experience of exile and return, the story of exile and return has been categorically masculine.<sup>218</sup> The creation of a female returnee allows authors to disrupt the classic prodigal son narrative and replace it with

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<sup>217</sup> Heidi Hansson and Michael Böss, 'From Reformer to Sufferer: The Returning Exile in Rosa Mulholland's Fiction', in *Re-Mapping Exile: Realities and Metaphors in Irish Literature and History* (Denmark; Lancaster: Aarhus University Press, 2005), pp. 89–106 (p. 89).

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid*, p. 92.

one where the goal of easy acceptance into the community upon return is impeded because of the particular expectations that adhere to the female in that community.

The Irish literary canon—from Oisín to Frank McCourt—features myriad variations on the (male) homecoming narrative, arising from a wide variety of modes and genres. Certain returnee narratives prove less than triumphant. Both Joyce’s Stephen Dedalus and James Bryden from George Moore’s ‘Home Sickness’ are presented as modern reinterpretations of classical returning heroes, but—characteristically of Modernist intelligentsia writers—both characters suffer from feelings of ambivalence toward the community to which they have returned, despite the nostalgia that brought them. In such narratives, however, the plot functions primarily to convey the protagonist’s own sense of disappointment and disillusionment with the community to which he has returned. The narratives discussed in this chapter, by contrast, centre on a variation of the *nostos* motif that features a female returnee and detail the difficulty that she experiences in being received by a community into which she is generally keen to reintegrate. Fundamentally, both Joyce and Moore focus their narratives on their protagonists’ sense of ambivalence towards that to which they have returned, and their consequent return to exile: for example, Bryden, in contemplating a return to New York, ‘tried to think that he liked the country he was leaving’.<sup>219</sup> Rosa Mulholland’s characters like *Norah of Waterford’s* Sabina Doolan and *The Return of Mary O’Murrough’s* eponymous protagonist are instead judged by the community itself and struggle to regain that which they have lost while abroad: a central, valued place

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<sup>219</sup> George Moore, *The Untilled Field* (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1915), p. 48.

within the community via marriage and children. This rejection serves at once as an effective cautionary tale for young emigrant women and also demonstrates that membership within one's community is a cornerstone to personal identity.

The narrative of return—even in the case of Joyce's mock-epic which, as such, employs merely the structural aspects and thematic elements of the traditional Grecian epic<sup>220</sup>—traditionally characterises the returnee as altered, more mature, and impatient to effect change upon what he perceives as a static community. Joyce follows this template, for example, in Stephen's impatience with the Gaelic Revival in the Telemachus episode. Historical evidence tends to support this phenomenon, as Markowitz notes that

it is often only when confronted with the homeland, and in particular with the stayee population in this place, that [returnees] fully realize such changes and the extent to which they have been influenced by new social systems and cultural norms, in terms of work ethic, gender roles, urban living, and independence.<sup>221</sup>

Such an assertion seems understandable when one considers the personal stories of many of Ireland's exiled intelligentsia, Joyce not least among them.

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<sup>220</sup> For example Stephen/Telemachus' return to Ireland or his return with Bloom/Ulysses's to his Eccles Street home after their journey to Nighttown. James Joyce, *Ulysses: The Corrected Text*, ed. by Hans Walter Gabler, Wolfhard Steppe, and Claus Melchior (New York: Vintage Books, 1986).

<sup>221</sup> Fran Markowitz, *Homecomings: Unsettling Paths of Return* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2004), p. 10.

In terms of women returnees at the end of the nineteenth century, however, emigration, rather than an experience leading to self-discovery and self-fulfilment, was widely viewed merely a means to an end. Frequently pushed out of the home as non-inheriting siblings, single young women were often obligated to support remaining family members through remittances, only rarely returning to Ireland permanently (Diner asserts that 'a statistically insignificant number [of emigrant women] returned to find a husband back home').<sup>222</sup> While Fitzgerald notes that 'local tradition' tells of single women who emigrated in order 'to save for a dowry that they would bring back to Ireland in anticipation of marriage to a farmer's son,' there is little historical evidence to support this claim, aside from individual accounts.<sup>223</sup> The fact that returnee narratives frequently feature thwarted matches serves to reinforce the author's suggestion that emigration leads inevitably, at least for peasant women, to isolation and disappointment. Furthermore, unlike narratives where the community welcomes the male returnee and lauds his transformative experience, peasant women characters risk ostracism at the hands of a community that will only accept them if and when they return to their former selves. In this way, nationalist adaptations of the traditional returnee narrative serve to demonstrate to young women that emigration, even if they intend to return, will mark both them as individuals and their relationships indelibly. The stories that follow, then, are variants on romantic narratives (a subject we will discuss in

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<sup>222</sup> Diner, p. 50.

<sup>223</sup> Patrick Fitzgerald, 'A Three-Way Process: Immigration, Internal Migration and Emigration', in *Migration in Irish History, 1607 - 2007* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 50.

greater detail in the following chapter), as returnees are usually barred from the role of traditional romantic heroine by their initial decision to emigrate.

### **Rosa Mulholland**

As has previously been noted, *Norah of Waterford* recounts the economic difficulties of peasant farmers during the land wars of the late nineteenth century. Joe Aherne struggles to manage the family farm with his brother and widowed mother, despite his significant debt to both the gombeen man and the land courts. Threatened with eviction, Joe's two married sisters arrive on the scene and decide to take matters into their own hands so that neither sister is burdened with the obligation to house their mother. Serendipitously, Sabina Doolan, a long-time Youghal resident, has recently returned from thirty years' absence with an American inheritance of two thousand pounds. Despite Sabina's advanced age and coarse manner, Joe's sisters agree that it would be in the family's best interest to make a match between Sabina and their elder brother, despite Joe's love for the penniless Norah Fitzgerald and his unequivocal refusal to compromise on the matter.<sup>224</sup> As has been mentioned, the Madonna-like Norah possesses a Catholic steadfastness and passivity that sets her apart from the greedy and deceiving foreign element (as represented by the absentee landlords and, at least initially, by Doolan as a returnee). By creating a homecoming narrative that disappoints readerly expectations, and by juxtaposing the positive characterization of Norah (as stayee) with Sabina Doolan (as returnee), Mulholland condemns women's decision to

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<sup>224</sup> These negotiations take on an interesting gender role reversal, as it was usually the fathers of the children who were to be married who made the match, and women were most often completely excluded from the process. See Conrad M. Arensberg and Solon T. Kimball, *Family and Community in Ireland* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), pp. 105–108.



emigrate while at the same time giving some acknowledgement of the social and economic pressures at home that might underpin such a decision.

Sabina Doolan is presented as alternately vain, arrogant, and both physically and socially undesirable. In direct contrast to Norah Fitzgerald's pious modesty, Mulholland employs Sabina Doolan to personify the worst characteristics of what she calls the 'returned Yank'. 'Yank' is a derogatory epithet which, according to Caitríona Ní Laoire, corresponds to 'a construction of vulgarity associated with conspicuous personal wealth and a tendency to glorify the achievements of America and to criticize Ireland'.<sup>225</sup> The use of such a term suggests that Sabina serves as exemplar of the widespread antipathy directed toward returned emigrants in general and returned emigrant women in particular. Norah is present at Sabina's homecoming scene and, not unimportantly, our initial view of Sabina is through her eyes. Upon Norah's return from her visit to the Cistercian monastery at Mount Melleray, she and Sabina are passengers on a steamer from Cappoquin to Youghal, and we are told that Norah, not knowing Sabina, gazes with 'fascinated wonder' at that small group of travellers that features Sabina as its remarkable central figure. Norah's initial impression of Sabina finds her to be:

a woman of middle age, not to say elderly, hard-featured, and weather-tanned, dressed studiously in girl-fashion, and assuming the manners of seventeen. Her course dark grizzled hair was tied in a bunch behind, and allowed to fall loose on her back, looking, indeed, more like the tail of a horse than a maiden's tresses [...] She had not learned the art of more or less successfully feigning youth, and

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<sup>225</sup> Ni Laoire, 332–344 (p. 341).

the result of putting her undisguised elderliness into a setting of girlish dress and manners was strange, if not grotesque. (NW 193)

Mulholland's homecoming scene clearly seeks to convey Sabina as a returnee possessed of the nostalgia for youth and a desire to regain her place within the community via marriage. The condemnatory tone with which she is portrayed implies, furthermore, that her clothing and comportment serve as a sort of deceptive disguise aimed at ensnaring a potential suitor. Within this description of Sabina's weather-tanned skin implies that she has become almost foreign, set apart from 'the fairness of [Norah's] face' which, Mulholland emphasises, is more in keeping with traditional depictions of Irish womanhood, which frequently note pale skin, tacitly emphasising purity (NW 72).

The emphasis on Sabina's age suggests an implicit concern here with the passage of time, perhaps as an oblique nod to myths wherein contact with Irish soil renders one aged, as told in the Tír na n'Óg story (a theme to be revisited in Mulholland's novel *The Return of Mary O'Murrough*). The (by implication hard) life of an emigrant has not been kind to Sabina's appearance, a concept underscored by Catholic pamphlets like Kelly's *The Evils of Emigration* which insists that 'Irish girls very soon lose the bloom of health which only an Irish air can give and keep, and become very different persons to what they would be if they had remained at home.'<sup>226</sup> All of this implies that Sabina is unlikely to succeed in the romance narrative—at least not by virtue of her looks—as well as underscoring the undesirability of emigration from the emigrants' perspective as well as the country's.

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<sup>226</sup> Kelly, *The Evils of Emigration*, p. 4.

Joe Aherne, who is also on the steamer, seeks out Norah and speaks with her about Sabina, referring to her as a 'dreadful old fool' and noting that those few villagers encircling her are 'all laughing at her though they make so much of her' (NW 194). One of the men sitting with Sabina—a young farmer named Darby Daly—is enjoying the flirtatious attentions of the returnee; he has

a droll look of enjoyment on his good-looking, easy-tempered countenance, silently accepting the giggling attentions of the maiden of the flowing locks, but making no attempt to respond to them except by an occasional smiling glance, appreciative of the humours of the situation. (NW 193)

What is interesting here is that the menfolk—or this man, at least—are allowing Sabina to flatter them, and not the other way around. That is, despite the fact that it is already widely known that Sabina has returned with a fortune, it is she who is obliged to make romantic overtures. Here Mulholland signals the injustice of the rural marriage market and the fact that, beyond childbearing age, even a woman in possession of a generous dowry cannot be taken seriously. Instead of a celebratory welcome amongst neighbours, Sabina's return is tainted by the disingenuousness of those who greet her; our first glimpse of the way in which she is received into the community suggests that, as a Yank, she will be tolerated only as much as will benefit those who seek her wealth.

Immediately upon Sabina's return, the eldest married Aherne sister, Judy Neary, engineers Joe's courtship *in absentia*. Wishing to get at Sabina's fortune before the gombeen man descends on the family farm or before she discovers the charade, the sisters extend a vicarious proposal on behalf of their absent brother with 'business-like

urgency' (*NW* 444). Joe, however, inadvertently learns that he is to be married to Sabina and abruptly puts an end to the negotiations, announcing that regardless of economic consequences, he intends to marry Norah. As he approaches Sabina's house in anticipation of a confrontation, Mulholland's description of Sabina becomes even less flattering: she is 'ungainly', her shadow 'contracting' and 'enlarging grotesquely', forming a 'ridiculous caricature of her ugliness'; Mulholland tells us that she is preparing on the eve of her wedding to 'give away herself and her fortune' (*NW* 501). The fact that it is she (and not a father or male family member) who must give herself away merely underscores her unsuitability as a romantic protagonist and her isolation from family and community. Above all, Mulholland's description reinforces the idea that even with an independent fortune Sabina remains trapped within the dowry system.

To the Aherne's surprise, however, Sabina's agreement to marry Joe has hinged not on her affections but on her sense of familial duty: she admits that she never would have allowed herself to be 'bothered into it if it hadn't been for your gran'father' (*NW* 503). This backstory of her repayment of a generations-old family debt (it was only with the Aherne's aid that the Doolans avoided the poorhouse) resolves the potential ideological conflict of an independently wealthy single woman who could in principle afford to act outside of the community's moral norms: Sabina is still beholden to an older male who was central to the community. Sabina proceeds to bestow much of her fortune upon Joe and Norah, allowing them to pay off the Aherne debt and remain on the land, while also effectively removing herself from consideration as romantic heroine, instead placing herself in her proper role of community philanthropist. This was

also the case with the elderly Mary Cassidy in Tynan's 'A Returned Emigrant' who, by virtue of her status as an elderly returnee, could only serve to be economically beneficial to the Nolan family: while Sabina's sense of duty suddenly renders her a sympathetic character, she is still not a marriageable one.

Having abandoned the possibility of romance, Sabina undergoes a physical and psychological metamorphosis. Ridding herself of the outward projections of her American-acquired materialism, Sabina effectively discards her returnee disguise and takes up what is considered by those around her as her proper role of benevolent spinster.

Here she set to work to pull off her fineries, one by one, and throw them on the floor; last of all she unfastened a long tail of hair which was tied in with her own at the back and dropped it into the fire. (NW 613)

This ceremonial divestment of adornment allows Sabina instead to recapture the matronly humility more in line with Revival-era ideals of peasant Irishness. The following day, Sabina visits a neighbour woman with two adult daughters. She proposes to exchange her elaborate gowns for 'a dacent stitch or two to cover the like o' me, fit for my years!' and is told by the woman that the Lord has 'givin' you back your sinses!' (NW 614). She adds 'I niver seen you look so well in all your born days, even when you were a girsha,' suggesting that, despite or because of her bitter rejection of the night before, Sabina's new-old role is one where she is recognised and appreciated by her neighbours (NW 614). Condemned to the margins of a romance narrative, Sabina's returnee status means that the only option for social inclusion is as community saviour: David Fitzpatrick

asserts that among rural peasants 'it was the custom for returning women to devote their ample fortunes to rescuing debt-burdened farmers, so earning the epithet "redeemer"'.<sup>227</sup> Sabina Doolan will prove exactly that: in light of the mockery to which she is subjected from the women of the village and the false flattery of men who seek her fortune, her identity within the community hinges on the financial resources with which she returns.

At the same time that Sabina enjoys the attentions of the Aherne family, a brief subplot details the more traditional return of another villager. Dermot, the son of Bridget O'Flannery, 'is home from America,' we are told, 'with money' (NW 553). Unlike Sabina's humiliating homecoming on the Youghal steamer, this vignette is more in keeping with the myth associated with rural returnees, thus creating an interesting juxtaposition. Here, the male returnee is welcomed back as a prodigal son (at least as long as he brings money—Norah meets his sister Bridget who is returning from Cappoquin 'fillin' me basket with groceries' thanks to his generosity) while the female returnee is depicted as disruptive to the community by robbing it of women of childbearing age and therefore transgressive of female domestic duty (NW 553). Instead, here, a 'party gathered strength of numbers as it went, for every one who heard the news turned on his steps and hastened forward with the triumphant sympathisers to have share in the extraordinary happiness of the Widow O'Flannery' (NW 555). The language that Mulholland employs to depict young O'Flannery's 'triumphant' homecoming, with its suggestion of festivity and community, stands in

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<sup>227</sup> Fitzpatrick, 'Emigration, 1871-1921', p. 636.

stark contrast to Sabina's saga of social exclusion. As the character of Dermot O'Flannery is never developed, however, it remains unclear as to why Mulholland sought to create mirror homecoming scenarios within the same narrative. One possibility is that Mulholland was attempting to emphasise the difficulties faced by female returnees who suffered a different type of economic pressure and social censure which was routinely based on marriageability. Certainly Mulholland's treatment of the returnee suggests that women's first duty is marriage to Irish men at home, and even wealth (sorely needed by their community) does not free them from its censure.

If Mulholland had chosen to depict her differently, Sabina Doolan could have been a quasi-feminist character. From a twenty-first century perspective, Sabina is interesting in that she plays a typically masculine role: an independent woman with her own money and mobility, she saves the couple and the Aherne farm; she defends Norah from the unwanted advances of Rogan, the gombeen man (mid-way through the narrative); she eventually establishes her own business in a neighbouring village. In the context of publication, however, Sabina's assertiveness indicates an imbalance in the traditional social order. Though Norah and Joe are saved by Sabina's maternalism (rather than British paternalism), it is important to note that Sabina is able to assume this role only due to the fact that her money is not earned but inherited through a male relative. This fact underscores the primacy of family and community over the earning potential of emigration. Mulholland's choice to limit Sabina to the stereotypical notion of a returnee advances the idea of the unacceptability of the returnee and the idea that

emigration is a crime (if not a sin in the discourse of these narratives) that can never fully be redeemed.

Similarly, *The Return of Mary O'Murrough* is at once a popular romance and an anti-emigration problem novel. This time Mulholland recounts the story of a returnee and her fiancé within a small county Kerry community and details the ways in which emigration transforms their fate in relation to each other, to their families, and to the larger community. It is within Mulholland's depiction of the protagonist's homecoming—and specifically in the way in which her protagonist is unrecognizable to her community—that Mulholland adapts a seemingly straightforward returnee romantic narrative to suit an anti-emigration discourse. By repeating one essential feature of the *nostos* motif—the *nostos-anagnorisis* or test of recognition<sup>228</sup> (like Odysseus' test by Penelope)—Mulholland underscores a larger message about the difficult economic choices made by emigrant women and the tenuous position occupied by returnees. In emphasizing the physical unrecognizability of her eponymous protagonist, Mulholland suggests the personal and social changes that threaten her relationship with her fiancé and destabilize the community.

Set, again, within the context of late-nineteenth-century political volatility surrounding the land wars, the novel's protagonist couple, Mary O'Murrough and Shan Sullivan, are presented at once as loyal lovers and as representative of a noble Irish peasantry struggling within an untenable economic situation. Shan's father Owny has refused to give his consent for the couple's union, as Mary brings no dowry to the

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<sup>228</sup> Marigo Alexopoulou, 'Nostos and the Impossibility of "A Return to the Same": From Homer to Seferis', *New Voices in Classical Reception Studies*, 1 (2006), 1–9 (p. 1).



match; in light of the circumstances, Mary relents and volunteers to emigrate to the United States, sending remittances to Shan's family so that they can purchase the farm outright and send for her. However, as the absentee landlords have continued to raise rents, Shan, and the now elderly Owny, have been unable to emerge from under the weight of their debt, the years have passed, and the lovers have continued to pine for each other from a distance.

Mary's reluctant decision to emigrate is condoned by the community, as it is with the specific intention of earning her dowry and therefore in keeping with community ideals (unlike Sabina Doolan). Preceding Mary's reappearance in the village, Mulholland establishes her, much in the same way as Norah Fitzgerald, as a Dark Rosaleen figure: virtuous, humble, and loyal. Mary is singled out for praise by her neighbours in her absence, because her gesture has been construed as a necessary sacrifice made in the spirit of romantic love—in fact, Mulholland tells us that Mary pleaded to be allowed to emigrate 'to earn money by her own industry till [Shan], by his strivings, should pull things to rights on the farm'.<sup>229</sup> This treatment of the collective efforts of the peasant couple suggests a shift from Butler and Tynan's depictions, which never achieve this level of focus. Through her initiative, Mulholland attributes a greater degree of agency to Mary's character than those previously examined. Considered a means to an end, Mary's emigration is largely regarded among community members as

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<sup>229</sup> Rosa Mulholland, *The Return of Mary O'Murrough* (London: Sands & Co., 1910), p. 46. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text as *RMO*.

an imposed exile, a necessary sacrifice endured for the benefit of the village life and, by extension, her domestic role within it.

After an unspecified number of years of separation, Shan disregards his father's edict and writes to Mary, asking her to return as soon as possible, irrespective of their collective financial situation. Upon her return, however, Mary is made aware of the fact that she has undergone a mysterious metamorphosis (ostensibly because of the hard conditions and physical labour of the emigrant's likely situation abroad), rendering her physically unrecognizable from the woman she was upon leaving for America. Mary's initial homecoming scene foreshadows what will be a difficult reintegration with her former neighbours: the visual language employed by Mulholland both here and throughout the repeated scenes of homecoming underscores the foundational connection Mulholland wishes to establish between physical change—described here as aging—and experiential change (a result of the ostensibly difficult living conditions associated with life in the United States).<sup>230</sup> Here Mulholland takes a cue from Catholic anti-emigration propaganda, which often emphasised the detrimental effects of life abroad. For example, minutes of the Catholic-based Anti-Emigration Society's March 1904 meeting, printed in the *Connaught Telegraph*, asserted that '138 inmates of the Ballinsloe Lunatic Asylum were returned emigrants, who had become insane owing to the stress and hardship of life in America'.<sup>231</sup> However, Mulholland's tale, in many ways a Revivalist encomium to rural life, downplays, in much the same way as the tales

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<sup>230</sup>Mulholland never describes precisely how or why Mary's looks have been indelibly altered, but she alludes much later in the story to work in the US being 'constant and exacting [and where] old age comes on quickly in the land that pays freely'. Mulholland, *The Return of Mary O'Murrough*, p. 281.

<sup>231</sup>'The Anti-Emigration Society', *the Connaught Telegraph*, 12 March 1904, p. 3.

discussed in the previous chapters, the specific difficulties of tenant farming that pushed Irish women to emigrate in the first place. Instead, Mulholland's use of the return narrative clearly seeks to imply—like Catholic propaganda and characters like Mary Cassidy in Tynan's 'A Returned Emigrant'—that physical distance from idyllic rural Ireland both ages and isolates the female emigrant, regardless of the intentions behind her gesture.

When her ship arrives at Queenstown, Mary arrives at a local inn where she is greeted by Kitty Casey, an old schoolmate of Mary's who is described as 'a blooming young woman with a baby in her arms' (a description that implies both youth and fecundity) (*RMO* 116). She is the first of Mary's former community to greet her as a stranger:

'An' who might you be now? I suppose it's no harm to ask, an' you comin' to see us?'

'My name is Mary O'Murrough.'

'Mary O'Murrough! Maybe you're some relation to Shan's sweetheart that went to America, an' was always comin' home, an' isn't come yet?

'I am,' said the stranger.

'See that now, how well I guessed it. Maybe yer an aunt of hers, though I niver heard she had any one there before her. She wasn't a bit like you, any way, except that you have somethin' of the blue in the eyes. Oh, sure, Mary an'

me were comrades at school, an' she was the purtiest crature y' could clap your eyes on.' (*RMO* 118-119)

Though Mary notes that 'there was little change in her school-fellow', she 'shrunk from revealing her own identity' having only at that moment 'thoroughly realized the change that had been wrought in her personal appearance' (*RMO* 119). Implied here, similar to Sabina Doolan, is the rapid aging of the returnee in contrast to the fecund and blooming young stayee. This example of *nostos-anagnorisis* figures centrally in the homecoming narrative and, when successful, is 'associated with a happy ending'.<sup>232</sup> The fact that Mary has failed this test of recognition forebodes a homecoming fraught with disillusionment and conflict.

Even before meeting Shan, Mary is gripped by the dread that he would fail to recognize her and struggles with 'a sense of more entire forlornness than had ever been experienced by her when the ocean had separated her from her old home and kindred' (*RMO* 120). This sense of despair underscores what Gray terms the 'truth of the self', that is, the sentiment that the returnee 'must be recognized by others if [her own sense of well-being is] to be nurtured and sustained.'<sup>233</sup> It is, then, the burden of being herself now that she is *in Ireland* rather than being herself abroad that exerts pressure over Mary. In Ireland, she is unalterably tied to the only role in which she is recognized (or

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<sup>232</sup> A classic means of determining the returning hero's right to his former place within the community, the test of recognition through arcane questions, for instance. This is true at least in the Homeric and Modern Greek ballads. Alexopoulou, p. 1.

<sup>233</sup> Gray, 'Longings and Belongings - Gendered Spatialities of Irishness', p. 194.

‘hailed’ in the Althusserian sense of being identified within a particular social role) ;<sup>234</sup> while outside Ireland, Mary was free from the weight of the cultural expectations of her neighbours. Stepping outside her prior role within the village’s domestic sphere has transformed her: as she tells Father Fahy, ‘I’m not the girl I was when I said good-bye to Killelagh’ (*RMO* 122). Here again Mary’s homecoming strikes a parallel to Sabina Doolan—another returnee who will be compelled to assume her community-mandated role and, when rejected, will finally admit to herself that ‘You were a decent girl enough [...] when you were cleanin’ grates an’ shoes in America [...] Now you have the whole o’ the counthry-side laughin’ at you’ (*NW* 613). Mulholland’s tone in both cases connotes a sense of both isolation and shame, suggesting that, regardless of the circumstances which forced the women to leave or the economic beneficence of their return, neither woman will be accepted in the new incarnation in which she returns.

The most striking example of conflict engendered by Mary’s transformation is in the first meeting with her fiancé. Throughout Mary’s time away, Shan has been sustained by the fixed image in his memory of

the vivid picture never obliterated, never faded by a line or a tint, of a face that had been the companion of his fidelity [...] That was Mary O’Murrough who went from him, and he had been told that she had come back to him. (*RMO* 157)

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<sup>234</sup> Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972), p. 173.

His first interaction with Mary, however, threatens this idealised, static version of her, and he refuses to recognize the actual Mary before him. Rather than the sanguine tone of romantic reunion, Shan's language remains cool and aloof:

‘It’s good of you to come to see me, said Shan, ‘but I disremember ever seeing you before. Will y’ kindly tell me who you are?’

‘Shan!’ cried Mary; at the sound of her voice he started.

‘Shan, do y’ mean that you don’t know me?’

‘I mean that I don’t. In the name of God, who are you?’ (*RMO* 156)

Here Mulholland disappoints her readers’ expectations with regard to the tropes both of the victorious returnee and of the lovers reunited. The lack of *nostos-anagnorisis* and the language of Mary’s repeated rejection by her community and her fiancé demonstrates the risks of leaving home, even when return is possible and even when emigration is socially condoned.

Tellingly, the only villager to unreservedly accept Mary is Shan’s father Owny, who has gone blind since Mary’s departure. Unlike his neighbours who make an effort to conceal their ‘general impression of dismay’ at Mary’s appearance, Owny recognizes Mary initially through his memory of her good works (‘twas you was the good nurse to your own mother; and God bless you an’ thry to hould me together’) and then through her attentions to him and to the family farm (*RMO* 148, 139). Mulholland suggests through Owny’s (literal) blind acceptance of Mary that regardless of her physical

change, emigration has not adversely affected her. With Owny's validation, Mary slowly becomes reintegrated into the community and is—as she regains her former appearance—increasingly accepted by her neighbours:

As the people grew accustomed to her altered appearance, and became acquainted with her new character, the painful consciousness of change in herself was less acute, and the cheerful spirit of hope which was natural to her was steadily striving to reassert itself. (*RMO* 150)

Mulholland's tone changes here, underscoring a sense of optimism that Mary might—like Sabina—be reintegrated within the community as a result of her good deeds. Mary's eventual reversion back to her former, younger self once again underscores Ireland's regenerative properties (thereby raising the reader's hopes for a reconciliation and happy ending with Shan) and also Mulholland's larger anti-emigration message around the difficulty of acceptance into one's former community after facing life-altering experiences.<sup>235</sup>

Couched here in the opposition of age and youth, these scenes capture a variation of the *Tír na n'Óg* myth where Oisín, homesick for his family, returns to Ireland. As soon as Oisín touches the ground while moving a boulder for some local

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<sup>235</sup> With regard to Mary's physical transformation, it is, finally, the villagers who choose to see and recognize that which has value and subsequently to oppose themselves against what they see as an interloper in the shape of the new but unrecognizable Mary. This dynamic illustrates a remarkable parallel to Foucault's hypothesis that social repression for what is viewed as aberrant behaviour is governed by 'an injunction to silence, an affirmation of *nonexistence*': the new Mary cannot be seen (before she is perceived to regain her former self), so she is invisible, voiceless—a non-entity in the community. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction* (New York: Random House, 1990), p. 4.

men, he instantly ages three hundred years. Suddenly he is completely unrecognizable to the horrified inhabitants of his former village ('the men raised a shout of wonder and applause; but their shouting changed in a moment into cries of terror and dismay').<sup>236</sup> Mary O'Murrough, like Oisín, will have aged through her adventures away from home, and as a result of those adventures, she will fail the initial returnee test of recognition. Mulholland reverses the Tír na n'Óg myth, however, seeking to demonstrate the vitalizing potential of rural Ireland: here Ireland can and does rejuvenate; instead, it is being abroad that ages—Ireland itself is the land of eternal youth (even Moore's jaded Bryden attests to the 'magic of returning health' he experiences once in Ireland).<sup>237</sup> This trope, as well as her laudatory descriptions of the landscape, allow Mulholland to eulogise Irish rural life for her readership while simultaneously exploring its hardships. Father Fahy notes the 'sprightly greens of the fields and pastures that bring their golden irises and star-daisies to the wayfarer's feet', but also marks 'the little cots and cabins [that] might be the very home and secure haven of happiness. Yet, what happiness, what security were possible here? In almost every house there reigned the woe of impending separation' (*RMO* 68-69). These are hardships that, Mulholland suggests, are the fault of British rule (like Butler), and absentee landlords (like Tynan), but not, for instance, the fault of Catholic upper middle-class landlords like themselves.

As is to be expected in a romance narrative, as Mary regains the traits of her old self through dealings with the neighbours, she becomes increasingly recognizable to

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<sup>236</sup> T.W. Rolleston, *Myths & Legends of the Celtic Race* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1911), p. 274.

<sup>237</sup> Moore, p. 39.



Shan, resulting in the couple's eventual union. Attending to Owny's 'newly weaned lambs' lends Mary an 'afterglow of youth' and contact with village children gives 'the fresh rose-tinge to Mary's own cheek' (both images connoting rural fecundity and the hope that the returnee will, through their care, regenerate rural Ireland) (*RMO* 193, 228). Finally, when Shan realises his love for Mary (because she is 'sweet an' good' to those around her—again, in recognition of her loyalty and service), the 'sad lines had disappeared from her face, her rounded cheeks regained their carnation tint, and her eyes, which had always kept their flower-like blue, shone again, full of light, like eyes of a girl of twenty' (*RMO* 261, 265). What Mulholland highlights here, not unimportantly, is not merely Mary's eventual recognisability but her actual regression to the 'girl of twenty' she once was, in essence effacing whatever experiential change Mary might have gained while abroad and placing her (as is proper in a romance narrative) in the hands of an 'older' male mentor figure.

By upsetting the classic returnee dynamic—one where the male partner travels and returns (changed) and the female remains geographically fixed, waiting (as is the case with Moore's Bryden and Margaret or Joyce's Leopold Bloom and Molly)—Mulholland underscores the unnaturalness of women's emigration. Despite what develops into a standard happy ending, Mulholland marks a note of tragedy that affects both the couple and the larger community. Mary becomes pregnant but loses the baby and is informed that she will be unable to bear children, the suggestion being that her gynaecological problems are a function of her age (Mulholland never allows Mary to speak for herself on the issue). Here again, Mulholland's discourse echoes Kelly's

Catholic Truth Society pamphlets which insist that the returnee will never ‘enjoy the pleasures of maternity’ as a result of her ‘terrible toil’ abroad.<sup>238</sup> For Mary, the local women gossip that ‘it was the years that come again’ her,’ underscoring Mulholland’s message to readers that women considering emigration are faced with an impossible decision: though the promises of emigration may be seductive, the ramifications of that decision will affect more than the individual herself (*RMO* 279).

When juxtaposed against Tynan’s returnee narrative in ‘How Mary Came Home’—another story of a woman who loses a child due to emigration—we can observe key differences in the two authors’ treatment of the emigrant character. Tynan concentrates almost exclusively on the way in which emigration affects the protagonist herself and gives her a voice with which to express her grief and resolve: when Mary returns home with the body of her infant son, she avers that although it is a ‘sad home-coming,’ she has ‘brought back all [she] prized’ and swears to him that ‘You’re mine, only mine. Never a man has any right in you at all, but only Mary Cassidy’ (‘Mary’ 83). Tynan’s wording—almost proto-feminist, proprietary, personal and spoken by herself to herself—differs importantly from Mulholland’s suggestion of Mary O’Murrough’s weighty responsibility toward the community. When compared to Mary Cassidy, Mulholland’s narrative enacts less censure of the emigrant in that Mary O’Murrough’s story is less of a cautionary tale. She suggests, instead, that return can, at least to some degree, erase the ills of the ‘lost’ years abroad. Both authors, however, make it clear

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<sup>238</sup> Kelly, *The Evils of Emigration*, p. 5.

that exodus—even when socially condoned—is an event from which the participant cannot remain socially (or physically or emotionally) unscathed.

As was the case with the vast majority of female novelists of her era, the expectation on the part of publishers and readers was that Rosa Mulholland's work should produce some variation on the romance narrative. In a letter to Katharine Tynan, Mulholland noted that while she preferred to write novels addressing social ills, she recognised the pecuniary advantage in publishing popular romantic fiction: 'Two books of mine will be out this autumn. "The O'Shaughnessy Girls" [an upper middle-class romance, and] "Father Tim" [a social problem novel]. The latter is the kind I like to write. The other pays.'<sup>239</sup> It must be noted, however, that even within her use of these standard plot forms, Mulholland frequently sought to address issues that affected her reading public. By integrating the *nostos* narrative form in the two novels discussed here, Mulholland demonstrates the Hobson's choice presented to peasant returnee women who sought to assume their previous place within the community they had been obligated to leave. Though her peasant characters are at times little more than simplified sketches, Mulholland draws on fundamental themes like the 'return myth' in order to demonstrate the inflexibility with regard to both rural matches and to women's place within a static rural society (a subject to be touched upon in the following chapter). While much of Catholic and nationalist anti-emigration fiction of Mulholland's era was replete with tales of peasant women who emigrated only to suffer tragic

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<sup>239</sup> Rosa Mulholland, 'Letter from Rosa Mulholland to Katharine Tynan', 14 September 1910, Box 3/34, John Rylands Library, The University of Manchester.

consequences upon their return, Mulholland complicates this depiction and her protagonists are both granted relatively happy endings, acknowledging the limitations of both the romance narrative and the domestic ideal for women in late nineteenth century Ireland.

### **Geraldine Cummins**

Geraldine Cummins, as has previously been noted, had, at least in her younger years, an abiding interest in women's issues. It would follow then, that the narrative of her 1919 novel *The Land They Loved* would address many of the same topics as Mulholland's problem novels with regard to the economic and social issues facing women at the turn of the century. As a member of Ireland's rising middle-class, however, Cummins' perspective affects the treatment of her female protagonist, and though we can refer to her work as a kind of peasant novel, the nine years that separate it from Mulholland's *Mary O'Murrough* mark it—and its more comprehensive and sympathetic treatment of the returnee—profoundly. In *The Land They Loved*, socio-political issues are addressed from the perspective of the strong farmer,<sup>240</sup> lending Cummins' peasantry—now economically autonomous—an agency heretofore unexplored by the other writers in this study. Cummins' work—as we will see in Chapter five—marks a return to nationalist politics, but in an entirely different vein from that of, for example, Mary Butler. Rather than Butler's highly stylised prose which serves to drive a broad nationalist ideology without addressing the actual circumstances of the rural peasantry, Cummins' more realistic style addresses specific challenges facing contemporary rural

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<sup>240</sup> Those farmers owning an average of 110 acres or more. Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, p. 382.

peasants (issues of land ownership and sectarian strife take centre stage) who here rely on the assistance of neither the upper middle-class nor the female emigrant. Despite this élan of rural middle-class independence, Cummins, like Tynan and Mulholland, still relies on a romance narrative to serve as a backdrop for a larger discussion on politics; her female returnee, however, is subject to far fewer of the social constraints laid before her by the other aforementioned writers.

*The Land They Loved* provides another example of an alternate version of the *nostos* motif, this time focusing (more in keeping with both the Homeric epic and with male-oriented Irish returns like those of Joyce and Moore) on the perceptions and actions of the returnee toward the place to which she returns. In choosing to emphasise the returnee's impressions, rather than the way in which she is received by the community, Cummins endows her protagonist with an agency absent in the previous peasant-based narratives discussed in this chapter. Unlike the ridicule and ostracism inflicted on Sabina Doolan or Mary O'Murrough, Cummins privileges her protagonist's viewpoint and experiences almost to the exclusion of outside perspectives, her narrative instead resembling Tynan's desire to demonstrate the ways in which emigration affects the individual. Here, Cummins' variation on the *nostos* motif focuses on the returnee's introspection and the way she perceives herself with regard to her physical and social surroundings, both at home and abroad.

After five years in America, Kate Carmody has decided to return home to Rathmore, her family farm in Droumavalla, county Cork. Prompted to emigrate by a

sense of adventure rather than (as is the case with the majority of the peasant emigrants in this study) by economic necessity, she sold her portion of the family farm to her half-brother Denis and accepted a cousin's offer of work in the United States. Despite the fact that she had been earning a wage far higher in America than could be expected at home, Kate suddenly experiences a wave of nostalgia and longs for a sense of community and proprietorship that she has not found while abroad. This nostalgia leads Kate to imagine herself as mistress of the farm adjoining her family property and decides that she will pursue either of two brothers, Steve and Michael Turpin, both of whom had proposed marriage before her departure. What she finds upon her return, however, is a vastly altered society from that which she left just five years before: both brothers—and the majority of her generation—have died either in sectarian conflict or World War One. In light of this rural desolation, Kate migrates to Dublin and back again, eventually striking up a romance with the youngest Turpin brother, Eugene, who must overcome his own obstacles in order to fulfil the dream of owning his own farm. As will be discussed later in the study, while Cummins' narrative eventually fulfils the promise of a romance narrative, the match between Kate and Eugene feels initially like something of a last resort on her part, underscoring Cummins' message about the personal and social cost of women's emigration.

Kate's homecoming—to which Cummins devotes the novel's entire first chapter and a portion of the second—begins while on board ship and later at Rathmore Farm, establishing a hopeful tone with regard to Cummins' protagonist. Almost immediately, however, Kate's eagerness to see Ireland from a distance causes her to '[slip] and almost

[fall] once or twice' while on the ship's deck, suggesting that her return will not be without difficulty.<sup>241</sup> The novel's first pages are in large part devoted to Kate's musings about her own sense of nostalgia and expectation. The term nostalgia, from the Greek *nostos* (meaning 'homecoming') and *algia* (meaning 'longing') captures perfectly Kate's sentiments that are foregrounded by the novel's plot when she arrives on Irish soil.<sup>242</sup> While neither of the novels discussed earlier in this chapter addresses the returnee's own feelings of homesickness, Cummins devotes several pages to Kate's reverie while approaching the Irish coast and to her (very different) nostalgia regarding rural Ireland. Furthermore, while Mulholland (as well as Tynan and Church propaganda generally) emphasises the emigrant's life of hard work, drudgery, and isolation, Kate—more like Tynan's Molyneux figure—recognizes that she 'had been fairly happy' in America and that she 'would not have missed such an experience [of living abroad] for the most prosperous farm in Ireland' (*TLTL* 2). It is her nostalgia, however—which she describes as a 'queer inarticulate desire'—that brings her back; having fallen victim to a restlessness and dissatisfaction with American city life, Kate feels 'a craving in her blood for the fields and wide spaces, and the sight of old faces, and the sound of old voices' (*TLTL* 4). The entire narrative surrounding Kate's emigration and return is one based on individual desire rather than social or economic obligation: Cummins is more frank about the potential advantages—and even pleasures—associated with emigration than any other writer under discussion. This very different treatment of the peasant returnee

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<sup>241</sup> Geraldine Cummins, *The Land They Loved* (New York: Macmillan, 1919), p. 1. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text as *TLTL*.

<sup>242</sup> Svetlana Boym, 'Nostalgia and Its Discontents', *the Hedgehog Review*, 2007, 7–18 (p. 7).

is linked to the greater prosperity of her farming class, reflected in the different socio-historical context in which the text was written.

Importantly, unlike economic exiles Sabina Doolan and Mary O'Murrough, Kate is drawn to the New World and new experiences solely by 'the urgings of the spirit of adventure' and decided to return simply because 'she had not yet found what she wanted' while away (*TLTL* 4). The crucial difference in Cummins' discourse is that she chooses to examine in no small detail the protagonist's rationale for leaving and returning, reflecting a far greater agency than either of the previous returnees and an initiative to experience life from beyond the limits of rural Ireland. In pursuing her desires without especial concern for family or romantic partner, Kate falls in line with Catholic depictions of girls who are 'smitten with the emigration fever', ostensibly in search of 'the splendour of life in America,'<sup>243</sup> but for Cummins her spirit is neither selfish nor dangerous. Kate's agency can be ascribed to the difference in her class status (Kate is the only character in this study who comes from a middle-class farming family), the time period in which the narrative is set, and the more progressive feminist ethos of the author herself. Cummins does, however, advocate an anti-emigration stance, as reflected in Kate's homecoming, which suggests that her adventure-fuelled emigration comes at great personal cost.

Once with her half-brother Denis and their Aunt Maggie, Kate, like Mary, undergoes the *nostos-anagnorisis*—the test of recognition. While still aboard the ship, she imagines returning to the farm to find Denis 'feeding the calves, maybe, as she

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<sup>243</sup> 'To Stem Emigration', *the Irish Independent*, 29 August 1924, p. 6.



drove up to the farm, and he would just drop his bucket and say, “Here’s Kate come back, and not a bit changed”” (*TLTL* 1). In contrast to Mary or Sabina, however, their reunion matches her high expectations almost verbatim: when together at last, Denis sanguinely tells Kate that ‘you’re not a bit changed. You’re yourself and no one else’ (*TLTL* 7-8). Considering the fact that Cummins’ plot is guided, like other novels in this study, by the classic aspects of the romance narrative, the recognition scene which remains so focused on Kate’s unaltered appearance serves to underscore her marriageability and the associated happy ending (a theme I will discuss in greater detail in the following chapter). Despite the years of hard work and experience that have come between Kate and her brother, Denis still marvels ‘at the few changes in her appearance,’ and tells her that she was ‘the same Kate as ever’ (*TLTL* 8). This ease of recognition and reception suggest that Cummins seeks to make a more positive argument for pledging oneself to Ireland and its future than the other writers discussed who emphasise instead the potential dangers of emigration and its toll on the emigrant. For Cummins, this discourse is not dependent on a categorical idealization of the Irish landscape and rural life, however—she does acknowledge the difficulties attached to such a life, and with a greater realism and specificity than Butler, Tynan or Mulholland—but her choice of topic and lexis play on the very familiar theme of nostalgia to suggest that however troubled rural Ireland might be, the psychic benefit of being at home is great.

While Denis himself is ‘in no ways changed,’ it is, instead, her home that has changed, both positively and negatively (*TLTL* 12). While nationalist depictions of

peasant life frequently centre on the adverse effects of emigration on the rural economy (including Mulholland and Tynan's), Cummins' narrative—written after the passage of the land acts—suggests a sense of financial optimism on the part of strong farmers who benefitted significantly from recent legislation in Kate's absence, ostensibly ameliorating their positions without benefit of remittances. 'Times have greatly changed,' Denis tells Kate proudly, 'you wouldn't know the farm and the good land that's in it now [...] I have a hundred pounds in the Munster Bank, and for the first time in twenty years my mind is at ease' (*TLTL* 9). Instead of homecoming narratives which frequently feature a comparatively wealthy returnee who is subjected to his former neighbours' tales of economic woe (Moore's Bryden reflects upon his return that his former friends 'were all very poor—poorer, perhaps, than when he had left them'),<sup>244</sup> Kate is regaled with news of financial success and mechanical advancement on the farm.

These tales of accomplishment are offset, however, by other, more distressing changes to the social landscape. Within days of her arrival, Kate finds that the village has been ravaged by war and emigration and emptied of men of marriageable age, including the two Turpin brothers who have died on opposite ends of the English-Irish struggle. Here Cummins' treatment of Kate's homecoming differs from more traditional depictions of the returnee in that she details the ways in which Ireland has undergone changes (both positive and negative) in Kate's absence. Other nationalist writers have a stake in demonstrating the immutability—and therefore the inculpability—of Ireland: for example, P.D. Murphy's short sketch entitled 'The Returned Emigrant' claims that

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<sup>244</sup> Moore, p. 36.

though the returnee ‘tries to slip back into his old life again’, he feels that ‘the whole life of the country has changed during his absence.’ Murphy claims at the story’s end, however, that ‘[t]he truth is that it is he has altered’ and that ‘[t]he Ireland of to-day differs in no way from the Ireland of yesterday, and the Ireland of to-morrow will pursue the same unyielding course’.<sup>245</sup> Instead, Cummins’ more realistic approach acknowledges Ireland’s changing social and political topography while still addressing the way in which these changes affect the emigrant.

This dearth of men poses a substantial hurdle to Kate’s plan upon returning, as she had presumed marriage was the way in which she would be able to remain within the community and procure a farm of her own. The only plausible marriage option left to her is the youngest and least appealing Turpin brother, Eugene. In Kate witnessing the mixed fortunes of the rural community and the uneasy omens for her own future, Cummins upsets both the homecoming and romance narratives. Instead of winning a happy match with either of the elder brothers (Kate recalls that there were ‘none to match them in their clear blue eyes, fine shoulders, great strength and weight,’ a physical vitality that suggests fecundity), she finds the only economic means to her desired lifestyle in a relationship with a man whom she refers to as ‘a misshapen furtive creature’ (*TLTL* 6, 62). Consequently, despite Kate’s ostensible independence, Cummins’ story still relies on the trope of marriage and the romance plot (with the promise of an appealing and suitable match at its heart) just as Mulholland and Tynan do, as reward or punishment for the actions and attitude of the (returned) emigrant.

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<sup>245</sup> P.D. Murphy, ‘Village Characters, Vol II: The Returned Emigrant’, *Ireland’s Own*, 30 May 1917, 364.

When Eugene calls on Kate a few days after her arrival, his first words indicate his recognition of her (thereby underscoring the potential for a romantic match). Eugene tells Kate that '[t]here's not a hair of you that's changed' (*TLTL* 34). When she asks him in what way he would have expected her to change, he responds that (unlike Shan Sullivan's expression of disappointment toward Mary O'Murrough) '[y]ou've a right to be changed' (*TLTL* 34). Eugene's openness to change, and to the ways in which that change might benefit him, stand in striking contrast to the general tone of the previous two novels discussed. Unlike Sabina and Mary, Kate's unique experience and the perspective it has leant her ('break[ing] barriers of thought and experience' as Said terms it)<sup>246</sup> are presented as beneficial to a community—demonstrated specifically by Eugene's family farm which has been weakened by long-standing economic dysfunction and political divisiveness. Additionally, while elsewhere in this study it has most commonly been the exile who is depicted as a victim of isolation while displaced from the home community, here it is Eugene who 'laid bare his heart to her telling her of the loneliness and isolation of his life' on Coomacarn farm (*TLTL* 54). Cummins suggests through Eugene that Kate instead poses a solution to this seclusion: 'if some one fresh, some one new was to come there 'twould all be different, and I'm certain I'd never feel lonely again' (*TLTL* 55). A new element to the morose atmosphere on Coomacarn farm after the brothers' death, she presents a welcome and potentially transformative influence. While the communities in Mulholland's novels seek to remain static in the face of change or foreignness represented by the (visibly altered) returnees, Eugene

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<sup>246</sup> Edward W. Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, Convergences (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), p. 185.

welcomes and seeks change. In this way particularly, the ethos of Cummins' rural encomium diverges greatly from that of Mulholland. While both authors recognize the need for change to the inefficient and antiquated farming practices at the root of peasant emigration, Mulholland vaguely couches her judgement in terms of colonial rule, insisting that without external interference (and with the aid of the indigenous upper middle-class), positive change could be achieved.

Kate's initial departure was prompted by a cousin living in the United States who told her that 'America was the only place for a smart girl like her' (*TLTL* 4). This encouragement, along with 'her refusal to [tie] herself up to any one' and her desire for experience were the primary factors leading her away from home (*TLTL* 5). Unlike Sabina Doolan, her fierce independence doesn't contravene her marriageability; unlike Mary O'Murrough, her emigration was not motivated by clear economic necessity but rather out of a desire to leave. Though Cummins' message is undoubtedly anti-emigrationist, she makes allowances for her protagonist's desire to leave in search of economic and social opportunity, and demonstrates the way in which her experience abroad leads her to a greater appreciation for, and a sense of fealty to, the land. As Cummins dovetails the motif of return with a standard marriage plot, Kate's eventual marriage to Eugene points up the resultant themes of return, marriage, and economic success (often represented as land—points to be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter) as aspects of the happy ending. Although her return is marked (like Sabina's and Mary's) by melancholy—the death of Eugene's brothers remains central to the novel's political message—Kate Carmody, because of her class standing, the era in

which the novel was written, and the author's political ethos, stands in parallel to more traditional male returnees who are able to benefit fully from their experience abroad (like Tynan's Molyneux, for example).

Unlike previous narratives' cautionary messages which link the female returnee to her requisite social acceptance, Cummins' tale supplies another type of anti-emigration rhetoric: Kate Carmody suffers from a self-inflicted sense of remorse, haunted by her own realisation of wasted time and missed opportunity while away. Although Kate's happy ending is foreshadowed early in the novel through her easy recognition and nearly seamless reinsertion into the community, the novel's point of tension resides in the protagonist's profound retrospective regret with regard to changes that her community has experienced in her absence. Here Cummins's anti-emigration discourse inverts a theme employed, to varying degrees, by the other authors discussed in this study and by anti-emigration writing in general: rather than the United States representing the land of opportunity, here, economic development and agricultural advancement have occurred in Ireland. Furthermore, the fact that, despite her periodic ruminations on her life in the United States, Kate's specific destination there is never mentioned merely underscores Cummins' emphasis on Ireland as the centre of narrative interest. And although Cummins relies heavily on nostalgic language and the romance plot to advance a political discourse, she alone allows the peasant returnee a categorically happy ending—a trope which is usually reserved for upper middle-class protagonists.

### **Narratives of upper middle-class return**

The adaptation of the *nostos* motif to woman-centred narrative is not exclusive to rural peasant fiction. On the contrary, both Tynan and Mulholland frequently wrote homecoming scenarios—albeit very different ones—for their upper middle-class protagonists as well. Instead of employing these homecoming scenes as an aspect of a larger discourse around the anti-emigration debate, however, here the celebrated return takes place mostly in the course of a romance narrative, particularly when introduced as an aspect of a happy ending (a topic which will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter). The rationale for this differing treatment of peasant and upper middle-class women is two-fold: first, Mary Butler, Katharine Tynan, and Rosa Mulholland all wrote in an era where travel for upper class women like themselves was much more fluid than for the peasantry; the social and leisure migration (what Posnock terms ‘leisure class dilettantism’)<sup>247</sup> from country to city was both common and expected. Second, and perhaps more importantly, upper middle-class authors sought to convey a very different message regarding the necessity of peasants’ presence in rural Ireland. Correspondingly, while travel for peasant women is depicted as fraught with danger, penury, and isolation, upper middle-class protagonists are neither frightened nor chided, and their return predictably demonstrates the positive effect that the upper middle-class can have on the home and community. Naturally, as it was in the interest of the authors to promote to their gentry (or at least upper middle-class) readers a

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<sup>247</sup> Ross Posnock, ‘The Dream of Deracination: The Uses of Cosmopolitanism’, *American Literary History*, 12 (2000), 802–18 (p. 803).

positive image of Ireland as a place to which to return, tales of upper middle-class return invariably end happily.

Sir Gerard Molyneux in Katharine Tynan's *The French Wife* demonstrates remarkably differing treatment of the peasant and upper middle-class homecoming. Despite the fact that Molyneux has absented himself from the family for an unstated number of years, his return is greeted with some enthusiasm by his home community. In fact, his return is celebrated by neighbours like Mrs Tyrrell who, at a society reception for Sir Gerard at her estate, Tyrrell Hold, lauds his ability to effect change (she tells Alison that 'he is going to set us all by the ears') and benefit the peasantry through his plan to present himself for a Parliamentary seat in the fight against emigration (his argument being, as we have seen, that, in constant danger in American slums, the peasants will be both safer and more content at home) (*FW* 18). In much the same way as a traditional hero narrative, Molyneux's experiences while abroad have altered his perspective (and his financial status) and thus enable him to propose solutions to one of the most challenging problems facing rural Ireland as it remained 'in the back-swing of the pendulum, [in] the hour of lying fallow' (*FW* 17). Not only does Molyneux perform good works by enlightening the otherwise unaware landlord class to the dangers facing their tenantry abroad (and thus encouraging them to philanthropy to ameliorate their tenants' circumstances at home—a theme already discussed in both Butler and Tynan's fiction), but he also meets—and instantly bonds with—Alison Barnard. The moment that the two shake hands for the first time, '[i]t was a case in which soul leaped to soul' (*FW*



18). Clearly, Molyneux's hero's welcome bodes well in the context of both an anti-emigration narrative and a romance plot.

Tynan's 1906 novel *The Adventures of Alicia*, while again not being a novel of return in the strictest sense, tells the story of a upper middle-class protagonist who is chosen from among her siblings to emigrate in order to support their family who, being too lax in collecting rents from their tenants, have fallen into reduced circumstances. Charged with 'building up the family fortunes' (including the public school education for her two younger brothers), Alicia is to act as paid companion to a wealthy Englishwoman so that the family might remain on their estate, Mount MacNamara.<sup>248</sup> Furthermore, as the eldest female, Alicia has been bidden to renounce her fiancé, the prestigious but penniless Sir Carew MacNamara, in favour of a more economically beneficial match which her family hopes she will make abroad. Despite being presented with repeated opportunities to abandon her fiancé (who has emigrated to India to save his neighbouring estate), Alicia pledges to remain true and return to him. After a series of adventures, not the least of which is her role in foiling a burglary of her mistress's estate, Alicia insists that instead of payment for her heroism, she 'would like to go home' as it is 'the only place in the world where I should not be frightened' (AA 290). This statement underscores both Alicia's loyalty to Ireland and its placement in the narrative as—in line with nationalist discourse—a stable and unchanging home base, though not in the same manner as in peasant fiction (that is, without the elements of

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<sup>248</sup> Katharine Tynan, *The Adventures of Alicia* (London: F.V. White and Co., 1906), p. 3. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text as AA.

risk and physical toil). Alicia eventually returns to Ireland where it 'rained happy things,' and is soon rewarded for her fidelity with a marriage to Sir Carew and, serendipitously, his discovery of a buried treasure, saving both families' estates (and underscoring Carew's placement as Alicia's economic superior, thereby rectifying the unsavoury idea of her family's reliance on her remittances) (AA 294).

While Tynan's narrative hints at the economic difficulties facing upper middle-class families at the turn of the century (presumably especially topical for her readership), the exigencies of emigration and return are treated entirely differently than in peasant depictions: here there is no stigma attached to the financial reward that upper middle-class returnees bring to the remaining family members. Furthermore, though the novel's premise of impending penury seems a potentially serious one, the tone with which the situation is treated remains light throughout, suggesting that Alicia's forced emigration is merely a pretext for adventures far from home, rather than a solution to an urgent predicament (though in the end both ends are accomplished).

While Tynan's anti-emigration ideology dictates that she emphasise to her readership the positive attributes of rural Ireland, her underlying aim is toward the retention of the peasantry. As the upper middle-class never emigrated from Ireland in numbers equalling their peasant counterparts, and their economic role in Ireland was dissimilar, the depiction of the upper middle-class returnee is therefore treated differently. Instead, for the upper middle-class characters, Ireland itself holds great promise and thus returning brings with it the assurance of happy endings rather than

loss and isolation. This logic is signalled through the trope of the return itself, which, in the case of the upper middle-class protagonist, deals with none of the aforementioned Greek traits like the test of recognition. The ease with which the upper middle-class figure reintegrates into her family and community underscores both her marriageability (which, as we have seen, would have been key in romance novels) and the happy ending.

Finally, Mulholland's contribution to a discussion of upper middle-class homecoming includes, notably, two novels, *A Fair Emigrant* (1896) and *A Girl's Ideal* (1905) where two daughters of (male) emigrants return from the American Midwest to Ireland with an express purpose. That the states from whence the protagonists come—Minnesota and Iowa, respectively—are two states lacking large urban centres and neither of which being an important destination for Irish emigrants, further differentiates the upper middle-class protagonists from the previously-discussed urban slum-dwelling peasantry. Though two very different narratives, both novels detail the adventures of women who travel to Ireland with ample economic resources and endeavour to engage in philanthropy to ameliorate the lives of the peasantry. It is worth noting that in both cases their funds are inherited from a male relative, underscoring male economic dominance in what are essentially romance novels (*à la* Sabina Doolan, though the parallel ends here). In both novels the peasantry play a very minor role, confined in the main to servants or neighbouring farmers and always the object of upper middle-class stewardship. Instead, Mulholland foreshadows a very different kind

of homecoming difficulty (what Wondrich terms the ‘impossibility of return’<sup>249</sup>—the discrepancy between expectation and reality), that she expresses through *A Girl’s Ideal’s* protagonists Tabby Chaigneau and her Aunt Sabina (‘Sib’). Aunt Sib, fearing that Tabby’s sense of nostalgia for an as-yet unseen Ireland might disappoint her, she tells her, while travelling from London to Dublin, that:

I do not want to damp your expectation, but it will do us no harm to remember that, having come from the scenes of a gay and pleasant world [in France and then London], we may find ourselves disappointed where we are going. Being of Irish blood we are subject to that heart-hunger for the green land which has always been a particularity of our race. And I have often heard tell that those who return, urged by their longing, do not care to stay in the place they have so desired to see. Happier, or at least more prosperous, countries have spoiled them, and they do not enjoy witnessing the native sorrows and disabilities which they have shared in at a distance.<sup>250</sup>

While Mulholland anticipates unsatisfying returns like Moore’s Bryden or Joyce’s Stephen, Tabby instead demonstrates a confidence and eagerness to effect change where needed and replies, ‘I do not want to see what is wrong, but to help to put things right.’<sup>251</sup> Tellingly, Tabby’s nostalgia results in none of the shock and disappointment that greets peasant characters like *Land’s* Kate Carmody. Instead, soon after arriving,

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<sup>249</sup> R. G Wondrich, ‘Exilic Returns: Self and History Outside Ireland in Recent Irish Fiction’, *Irish University Review*, 30 (2000), 1–16 (p. 11).

<sup>250</sup> Rosa Mulholland, *A Girl’s Ideal* (London: Blackie and Son, 1905), pp. 62–63.

<sup>251</sup> Mulholland, *A Girl’s Ideal*, p. 63.

the two women purchase a defunct factory owned by their ancestors and, overcoming a series of obstacles with aplomb, re-launch the family business, providing employment for young women. The sisters, with the aid of other upper middle-class friends made along their travels, proceed to engage in a wide range of philanthropic projects that benefit working class women particularly.

*A Fair Emigrant's* Bawn Desmond immigrates to Ireland from Minnesota with the express purpose of clearing the name of her father who was forced to flee after being wrongly accused of murder. Arriving in her father's native village disguised as a woman wishing to advance the rural butter industry, Bawn single-handedly provides employment for a peasant family, clears her father's name, and, marrying a member of the local upper middle-class, combines the family fortunes. Mulholland suggests that the local upper middle-class fear she may be simply a Yank unwisely investing her money without sufficient knowledge of the exigencies of either farming or business, recalling, at least in some measure, the distain which greeted Sabina Doolan—another entrepreneur. Unlike the Sabina Doolans of the returnee narrative, however, Bawn, because of her social station, is eligible to perform the roles of both romantic heroine and social redeemer.

In her discussion of returnee women, anthropologist Carol Stack asserts that '[y]ou can go home. But you can't start from where you left. To fit in, you have to create another place in that place you left behind.'<sup>252</sup> This statement may hold true for the Irish literature of homecoming under discussion, but only where it features peasant

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<sup>252</sup> As cited in Stefansson's introduction. Markowitz, p. 12.

protagonists (with the obvious exceptions of the previously discussed works by Joyce and Moore, who are quite well served by Stack's characterization). Mulholland's peasant characters like Sabina Doolan or Mary O'Murrough face disillusionment and disappointment because they have attempted to return home and to assume their previous place in society despite the experiences that have transformed them and (implicitly) their original act of faithlessness in leaving. Upper middle-class characters, however—regardless of how many years absent, or even if setting foot on Irish soil through the nostalgia of long-deceased relatives—are able to occupy a place of privilege within Irish society as long as they wish to confer benefit on the peasantry. More in keeping with a traditional victorious return, theirs is, as Perl asserts, 'a return to something old but also a new beginning; it is a meeting of oldest and newest, yet it is in addition the seemingly conclusion of an unbroken continuum.'<sup>253</sup> The upper middle-class, to respond to Stack, can not only start from where they left, but from where previous generations left; to pick up and retrieve that which was lost—be it a tarnished reputation or a thriving business in Irish homespun cloth, transforming Ireland with expertise and money that comes from outside.

## Conclusion

Perhaps literature's most famous returnee, Odysseus, upon arriving at Ithaca, disguises himself as a beggar and undergoes Penelope's tests of recognition (*nostos-anagnorisis*), eventually convincing her of his identity after a twenty-year absence. His success in a

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<sup>253</sup> Perl, Jeffrey M., as quoted in A. Stefanidou, 'A Cosmopolitan Exile's Nostos: Modernity, Memory, and Myth in Andonis Decavalles's Poetry', *The Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora*, 28 (2002), 7–55 (p. 41).

*nostos-anagnorisis* is a key element to his status as a hero, as he wins both the affections of his wife and the accompanying social and economic privileges. This chapter has demonstrated that anti-emigration narratives, by necessity, alter this dynamic, making only peasant women characters subject to this test, as nationalist authors seek to impart on their readership the notion that return is fraught with difficulty and therefore emigration as a whole is unwise. Furthermore, the language of loss, even in more realistic peasant novels like *The Return of Mary O'Murrough* and *The Land They Loved*, suggests that returnees are always in some way bereaved, having exchanged their future potential in Ireland for higher wages and greater social freedom found abroad. Even in these, the best cases for peasant returnee women, the authors seek to underscore not a note of conquest but of concession—either for the country (in the case of Mary) or for the individual (for Kate).

Upper middle-class novels, like the peasant fiction discussed above, still adopt an anti-emigration stance; however, their strategy is a different one. Instead of condemning or providing a cautionary tale in which the lesson is negative (linking emigration with danger abroad and unhappiness or disappointment if one attempts to return), upper middle-class fiction employs a more positive strategy, emphasizing the good that these women are in a position to do by virtue of their class, the psychological wellbeing that emigration can confer, and the oblique promise that fidelity to their native land might be (unlike Sabina Doolan, for instance) rewarded by romantic satisfaction. Both return scenarios, however—peasant and gentry—present women

with a separate but weighty responsibility toward family, community, and nation that echoes both Catholic and nationalist anti-emigration rhetoric.

This association between happy marriage and return continues in the next chapter, 'Courtship and the Romantic Emigrant', which examines the ways in which the authors employ standard tropes associated with the romance novel in order to advance an argument that, even in tales that end happily, emigration disrupts the normal development of courtship and marriage.



## Chapter Four: Courtship and the Romantic Emigrant

The homecoming plot, and deviation from its expected form, is one literary strategy common to the writers under discussion. The marriage plot, which is often used in conjunction with the returnee narrative, is another. Though previously discussed in various frameworks within the study, it is useful to look at the themes of romance and marriage independently as they play such a significant role in anti-emigration fiction. Central to most of these works, the romantic plot in the context of anti-emigration discourse demonstrates the ways in which the progress of romance is thwarted or disrupted in some way as a result of the act of emigration. The authors examined here vary dramatically in terms of the style with which they treat the romance narrative. The political zeal of Mary Butler and Geraldine Cummins, for instance, regularly supplants romantic passion. Katharine Tynan alone among the authors allows for some degree of romance (and even sexuality) but—particularly in peasant fiction—more frequently highlights the personal toll of an unhappy match. Rosa Mulholland's depictions, as we have seen, tend more toward the realist than other writers under discussion, and her investment in the social realities facing the protagonist couple allows little room for romance. In each case, the standard trajectory of the romance is disturbed by emigration, underscoring the authors' aim to disappoint readerly expectations in order to realise a broader ideological goal.

This chapter examines two differing treatments of the romance narrative. Here we take 'romance' in the sense of the traditional romance plot line which features a

variety of easily-recognizable stock components, chief among them being the female protagonist, the romantic obstacle, and her inevitable marriage at the novel's dénouement. Examples of the upper middle-class romance by Mary Butler, Katharine Tynan, and Rosa Mulholland will be explored, all of which follow the 'society romance' model where the young woman enters into society and benefits from the guidance of an older, worldlier male.<sup>254</sup> Here however, the anticipated romantic passion is largely replaced by political zeal and shared dedication to a common cause (most frequently the fight against peasant emigration). Secondly, we will read peasant fiction romance narratives by Tynan, Mulholland, and Cummins. While these plots may still feature a classical suitor, at least initially or in appearance, the female protagonist is presented with far fewer domestic choices—a scenario which demonstrates that the protagonist remains trapped between the often similarly hard choices of (undesirable) emigration or (virtuous but, realistically, unrewarding) hardship and domestic drudgery at home. While Cummins treats her peasant protagonist's decision to emigrate in a more forgiving manner than either Tynan or Mulholland, she nonetheless affirms the idea that marriage is among the few economically-beneficial options afforded her. Thus the stories discussed here rarely develop into fully-fledged romances: both the ideological message and the attention paid to social realities mean that the happily-ever-after dénouement is deliberately forestalled. The fact that the reader's expectations are raised—and then thwarted—is central to the ideological effect of these stories (that is,

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<sup>254</sup> See Julie Shaffer, 'Not Subordinate: Empowering Women in the Marriage-Plot - the Novels of Frances Burney, Maria Edgeworth, and Jane Austen', *Criticism*, 34 (1992), 51–73.

the tension between emigration and romance) and underscores the authors' goal of employing literature as a political vehicle.

The works discussed below, whether they focus on upper middle-class or peasant characters, are largely devoid of the passion encountered in most sentimental romances. In both cases, the romance is subjugated to a message about emigration, and, in a larger sense, to a message about nationalism and social duty. Although these works all deal with marriage or intended marriage, they tend to lack a romantic or (sexually) passionate sensibility, and the language of romantic passion is applied instead to anti-emigration and Irish nationalism. These stories are often either zealous in tone (zealotry supplanting romance in the case of those authors with a political agenda) or bleak (signalling the paucity of romantic options for women when the social realities of poverty are concerned). For both upper middle-class and peasant narratives, romance tends to conflict with more noble or selfless causes, underscoring the obligatory sense of duty to family, community, and nation over the desires of the individual. Even in the case of novels which were not *primarily* intended as anti-emigration propaganda (as is the case with Tynan particularly, and in some instances with Mulholland), the works' stance with regard to nationalism and anti-emigration still exerts pressure on the narrative, determining its moral attitudes.

### **Historical context**

The phenomena of rural courtship and marriage are frequently-addressed subjects within the peasant fiction under study. While marriage plots here routinely feature

emigration as an impediment to or at least a complicating factor in rural romance, the stark contrast between romance as depicted in peasant fiction and the reality of the rural match bears fleshing out. While both anti-emigration fiction and religious publications decry emigration as a key factor in high celibacy rates among Ireland's rural population (and, by extension, what was frequently termed 'race suicide'),<sup>255</sup> Ireland's low marriage rates were in actuality a confluence of factors, of which emigration was merely one.

In 1901, over half of all Irish women aged between twenty-five and thirty-four remained unmarried, making Ireland's celibacy rates the highest in Europe. The farming marriages that did occur were most commonly between older (sometimes significantly older) males and young females, arranged by the couple's families largely on the basis of economic accord.<sup>256</sup> Romantic courtship, as such, was almost non-existent in post-Famine Ireland, the emphasis instead being on the way in which the young couple's match could benefit the rest of the family.<sup>257</sup> Miller asserts that communal mores dictated that 'wives patiently suffer the results of "God's will" in terms of their lack of choice in arranged dowry marriages,' underscoring the ideology of Christian sacrifice so frequently found in the stories under discussion.<sup>258</sup> Joanna Bourke notes that these loveless matches were a function of 'the relationship between the marriage market and the economic constraints imposed by [post-Famine] impartable inheritance patterns'.<sup>259</sup> To complicate matters, parents tended to keep land in their possession for as long as

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<sup>255</sup> Anonymous, 'Glimpses of the Gaeltacht, III', *the Irish Monthly*, April 1930, 180–85 (p. 180).

<sup>256</sup> Innes, p. 39.

<sup>257</sup> Clear, *Social Change and Everyday Life in Ireland, 1850-1922*, p. 85.

<sup>258</sup> Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, p. 407.

<sup>259</sup> Bourke, p. 13; Arensberg and Kimball, p. 105.

possible, thus limiting possibilities for the inheriting son and other siblings dependant on incoming dowry money to make matches of their own or to leave in order to seek employment elsewhere. Young unmarried women, then, had few economic options in rural Ireland—options which, aside from emigration, were often limited to unpaid servitude, keeping house for other unwed siblings or ageing parents—another theme which recurs here regularly, particularly in Tynan’s short stories. Their superfluity was exacerbated by rural Ireland’s transition from tillage to pasturage farming, making women’s farm work increasingly obsolete.

Nonetheless, Catholic publications routinely blamed Ireland’s rural desertification on women’s desire to emigrate rather than marry and raise a family. D. Dempsey, for example, cites emigrants’ ‘desire for comfort’ and ‘an aversion to undertaking responsibilities that could be avoided’.<sup>260</sup> In reality, however, women emigrated, at least in part, because of a lack of opportunities—either social or economic—open to them within their home villages. Luddy avers that ‘[p]oor employment prospects and poor marriage prospects were factors that help to account for the high levels of emigration among Irish women in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.’<sup>261</sup> Even when financially able to marry, most women were still unable to choose their own marriage partner or the circumstances into which they would marry. Miller notes that ‘those who dared defy the now-ubiquitous “match” and dowry systems risked poverty, parental displeasure, communal contempt, and loss of caste’,

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<sup>260</sup> D. Dempsey, ‘Facts and Figures about Eire’s Population’, *The Irish Monthly*, 67 (1939), 529–35 (p. 535).

<sup>261</sup> Luddy, *Prostitution and Irish Society, 1800-1940*, p. 5.

illustrating the gravity of made matches.<sup>262</sup> Therefore, given the possibility of a loveless match and penurious conditions, as Clear points out, 'when women in twentieth-century Ireland had an alternative to the hard life of a farmer's wife, they often took it.'<sup>263</sup> It should be noted, however, that though the concept of the mercenary match between rural peasants has often been denounced in literature of the period (seen here in works by both Mulholland and Tynan, as well as other influential works of the latter half of the nineteenth century, like Kickham's popular *Knocknagow*, 1873), general awareness of the rituals behind rural courtship and marriage have been conveyed to readers largely by urban intellectuals and upper middle-class writers who were themselves far removed from the quotidian affairs of the peasantry. As Clear observes, matches tended to be viewed by readers 'through the lens of nineteenth-century urban sentimentality', which suggests that the financially-motivated match and the lack of romance were part and parcel of rural life not just in Ireland but in rural life abroad as well.<sup>264</sup>

With regard to upper middle-class women, their relationship to emigration/migration/travel was both more common and more socially acceptable (as has previously been noted); therefore, it is not surprising that the link between emigration and romance in the context of upper middle-class fiction is treated quite differently by the authors under discussion here. While, historically speaking, upper middle-class women also bore the pressure to make economically beneficial matches

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<sup>262</sup> Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, p. 406.

<sup>263</sup> Clear, *Social Change and Everyday Life in Ireland, 1850-1922*, p. 79.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid*, p. 85.

and to bear offspring so as to continue the genetic line, unlike peasant romance narratives, emigration only rarely serves as an obstacle to couple's courtship or marriage. Instead, as we have seen, the female half of the upper middle-class couple is frequently depicted as playing an advisory role for their tenantry, and therefore the couple's courtship is subordinated to the care of the peasantry.<sup>265</sup> The upper middle-class's passionless courtship, then, is rooted not in the 'made' match but in the couple's shared sense of duty in saving Ireland through philanthropy, of which anti-emigration efforts are a central aspect.

### **Emigration and upper-class romance**

The upper middle-class fiction romance plots discussed below employ the familiar device of the mentor-pupil relationship between an older, worldlier male protagonist who initiates his comparatively inexperienced female counterpart.<sup>266</sup> As Rosa Mulholland's protagonist in her 1905 upper middle-class novel *A Girl's Ideal* states: 'If I ever marry it will be a man ten, twenty years older than myself, someone infinitely wiser and stronger than myself, someone who will know everything and put me right.'<sup>267</sup> Normally, this trope is used to demonstrate how the young ingénue will achieve self-awareness through courtship, receiving from her partner a sentimental education and eventually abandoning her pursuits outside the home in favour of the domestic duties associated with caring for her husband and children. In this way, the romance plot

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<sup>265</sup> Maria Luddy, 'Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century Ireland', *Voluntas*, 7 (1996), 350–64 (p. 360).

<sup>266</sup> George Paizis, *Love and the Novel: The Poetics and Politics of Romantic Fiction* (New York, N.Y.: St. Martin's Press, 1998).

<sup>267</sup> Mulholland, *A Girl's Ideal*, p. 53.

serves to affirm what John Cawelti asserts are the ideals of 'monogamous marriage and feminine domesticity.'<sup>268</sup> Here however, although marriage is a central aspect and theoretical end point of the narrative, it is not the romantic love that drives the narrative. Instead, the mentor-pupil theme is adapted to promote nationalist politics in general and an anti-emigration message in particular: a sentimental education is replaced by a Catholic nationalist education; instead of caring for children, the upper middle-class female cares for the peasantry.

The stories discussed below suggest that the upper middle-class couple's shared devotion to philanthropy and the fight against emigration will lead to a happy ending of romantic and domestic vitality. Furthermore, the sympathetic protagonist does not entertain thoughts of leaving Ireland in pursuit of her own individual desires—desires which would be out of step with her nationalistically-minded suitor. Instead, as a function of the rules of the courtship plot, but also of the political aims that lie behind the novels, her ambition should only support the couple's shared cause. Lastly, the inherent suggestion of economic success within marriage indicates that—at least for the upper-class, and in these ideologically-driven imaginings of Ireland—women can be happy, fulfilled, and economically solvent without leaving home.

This chapter examines Butler's *Ring of Day's* Beatrice Burke and Eoin O'Gara and Tynan's *The French Wife's* Alison Barnard and Gerard Molyneux as examples of this phenomenon. The former, as has already been argued, is a nakedly political text,

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<sup>268</sup> John G. Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), p. 42.



extolling nationalist duty and submitting all other concerns to Butler's nationalist agenda. While the latter also introduces similar themes about philanthropy, nationalism, and collective work to improve conditions in Ireland, they serve as merely one dimension in a more even-toned novel. In each case, instead of professing their love to one another, both couples profess their love of a shared ideal. For Butler that ideal is Irish independence in a broad sense, which encompasses anti-emigration measures; for Tynan it is anti-emigration more specifically, through general improvements to the nation's economic infrastructure and the election of Molyneux to Parliament. Furthermore, while Beatrice Burke does, at the start of the couple's relationship, profess her love for O'Gara, her ardour is almost immediately conflated with and subsumed by her nationalist sentiment and the fight for independence. Alison and Molyneux, by contrast, share a practically fraternal bond, their courtship almost entirely absent of romantic language, with marriage as an unspoken but foregone conclusion early in the novel. When Alison and Molyneux meet upon his return to Ireland, Tynan tells us that, instantly, 'the sympathy between the two was as assured as though they had grown up from children together',<sup>269</sup> underscoring a tone of camaraderie rather than romantic attraction. In both cases, however, the narrative contains the traditional components of the romance model (the meeting, the courtship, the obstacle, and the marriage) at least in part because the protagonists' financial means allows for this option. The romance formula also allows the authors (particularly Tynan) to recognize the economic imperatives involved in uniting the fortunes and estates of economically and socially

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<sup>269</sup> Tynan, *The French Wife*, p. 18.

suitable partners, demonstrating the belief that safeguarding property and maintaining the economic and genetic strength of Catholic families can function perfectly in tandem with a nationalist agenda.

Early in the narrative of Mary Butler's novel *The Ring of Day*, Butler introduces Beatrice Burke's potential suitor, George Eyre.<sup>270</sup> Belonging to a family of the same socioeconomic status as the Burkes, and owning the adjacent property, Eyre seems Beatrice's most likely and appropriate mate. Literate, charming, and wealthy, Eyre shares both Beatrice's disdain for Dublin society and her interest in 'another Ireland, the real Ireland' (that is, the Irish-speaking West), although he recognizes that, as an absentee landlord himself, he 'differ[s] from it utterly' (*RD* 18). Beatrice's uncle Maurice in particular is in favour of the match, informing Beatrice's aunt that it has long been his wish 'to join the two families and the two properties [and] it is well known in Galway that I intended to leave Dunmacduagh to [Beatrice] on condition that her husband quarters our arms with his, and adds our name to his' (*RD* 65). In suggesting the possibility of an economically-beneficial Burke-Eyre pairing, the novel proposes a conventional upper middle-class romance plot line and then proceeds to reject it as Beatrice rejects Eyre in favour of the socially inappropriate nationalist campaigner Eoin O'Gara. Beatrice's match with O'Gara instead of her socio-economic peer allows Butler to employ the themes of courtship and romance and then to modify them in order to serve her nationalist discourse.

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<sup>270</sup> Ní Chinnéide asserts that George Eyre was in actuality a fictionalised George Moore, which is plausible, given that Butler attended Gaelic language classes with Moore's brother, Colonel Maurice Moore. Máiréad Ní Chinnéide, *Máire de Buitléir: Bean Athbheochana* (Baile Átha Cliath: Comhar Teoranta, 1993), p. 148.

Eyre's primary role is to serve as the voice of the sceptic upper-class reader who questions the soundness of Beatrice's romantic, economic, and political choices. Conscious of the futility of his romantic pursuit of Beatrice, Eyre tells her that 'I know you don't dislike me. In fact you rather like me, but your feelings towards me will never get beyond that state. I'm sorry, but not surprised. I'm not the type of man to attract you' (*RD* 60-61). Aware of the social and economic sacrifices that Beatrice would be forced to make for a life with O'Gara, however, when he does eventually propose marriage, Eyre entreats Beatrice to consider what she could gain by 'marrying into [her] own set' instead of pursuing O'Gara and 'throwing [herself] into a morass of difficulties and perhaps disaster' (*RD* 131). What Eyre is loath to acknowledge, however, is that O'Gara, though socially and economically unsuitable, stirs an as-yet unknown passion in Beatrice.<sup>271</sup> It is O'Gara who will finally serve as mentor, guiding her pursuit of nationalistically-motivated philanthropy and the promotion of the Irish language. While the idea of the female protagonist choosing the passionate, slightly dangerous, unsuitable suitor over the conventional but dull one (at least initially) is a familiar and well-used plot line,<sup>272</sup> what makes this match interesting is that the shared passion here is political rather than sexual.

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<sup>271</sup> Ní Chinnéide cites Butler's memoir of the evening she met 'a tall rather gauche young man with vague-looking eyes which appeared fixed on something far away'. The man turned out to be Patrick Pearse, with whom she became close. Ní Chinnéide, p. 47.

<sup>272</sup> Hinz asserts that one of two main types of obstacles in romantic fiction is 'the seeming disparity between the two lovers: they come from different backgrounds, they are from different social classes, one is vulgar and the other is refined.' Evelyn J. Hinz, 'Hierogamy versus Wedlock: Types of Marriage Plots and Their Relationship to Genres of Prose Fiction', *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 1976, 900-913 (p. 902).

Eyre understands the appeal of O’Gara to a budding nationalist like Beatrice, recognizing that O’Gara, as ‘the personification of Faith and Intensity,’ possesses ‘the two qualities which most appeal to you’ (the wording here is telling, as Butler once again conflates the language of romance, politics, and religion) (*RD* 61). As Eyre understands, Beatrice prefers ‘O’Gara in his rough tweed suit, talking uncompromising Nationality, to George Eyre, D.L., of Castle Burren, in his luxurious flat, talking of Art, and railing at the beliefs she held sacred’ (*RD* 131). The force that drives both the couple and the romantic-nationalist narrative is Beatrice’s passionate pursuit of Irish independence under O’Gara’s tutelage. Beatrice, though she had at first ‘been interested in his ideas,’ proceeds to fall in love with O’Gara’s ‘decided character, moving straight for one definite goal’ (*RD* 110). Butler implies through this seemingly inappropriate pairing—O’Gara’s noble poverty over Eyre’s decadent materialism—that a shared commitment to an ideal is more important than a shared background or the potential for shared wealth, echoing the nationalist platform of anti-materialism as a key marker of ‘Irishness’, though usually in the context of the peasantry.

Upsetting the expectations of the traditional romance narrative, O’Gara and Beatrice’s love story is focused almost entirely on Ireland rather than on each other. Initially, the novel’s fervid tone and language bear all the hallmarks of a sentimental, even passionate, romance: upon her realization that she loves O’Gara and not simply his ideals, Beatrice recounts that her ‘whole body was quivering, and her mind aglow with tumultuous [*sic*] emotion’ (*RD* 108). However, Butler employs similar expressions for Beatrice’s visit to Western Ireland when she realises that

“[t]his is my own land. These are my own people,” she felt in every fibre of her being, and melting in a passion of tenderness, she longed with an intense longing to do something for the uplifting of her people and her times. (*RD* 142)

The language with which Butler builds these descriptions actually serves to conflate the idea of physical sexual arousal with philanthropic duty, intending to make nationalism more enticing to an upper middle-class readership.

What might otherwise be a sexual tone of O’Gara and Beatrice’s romance is regularly displaced by the quasi-religious imagery of political rhetoric, and the quality of her prose suffers as a consequence, rendering neither the romance nor the nationalism particularly convincing: O’Gara proclaims that Beatrice ‘stood as the Incarnation of Faith: faith in a radiantly beautiful Ideal, but one difficult of attainment, like all things high and holy’ (*RD* 79). When confessing his love for Beatrice, he tells her that ‘There was never a flower on the face of God’s earth guarded as tenderly as you will be, my White Blossom’ (*RD* 219). Butler’s romance emphasises the purity of Irish women (as evidenced in Beatrice being referred to here as a White Blossom, the flower being a common metaphor for female genitalia) as well as the primacy of the fight for Irish independence. The types of sweet nothings O’Gara whispers into Beatrice’s ear are not the standard fare for romance novels, as he insists to Beatrice, for example, that her ‘only rival will be Caitlin Ni Houlihan [the female mythical, and politically freighted, representation of Ireland]’ (*RD* 221). The language that Butler employs to express Beatrice’s sentiment toward O’Gara, by contrast, is far more traditional romance fare:

‘She was reckless, indifferent to everything except to her love’ (*RD* 112). The action that that passion takes, however, will be restricted to her participation in his mission of nationalist politics to free Ireland.

A reviewer for the *New Ireland Review* underscores the conflation of the novel’s principal characters’ romance and their fight for independence when he glowingly observes that ‘Beatrice and Eoin are the incarnations of devotion to an ideal. Nationalism is their one thought and aim. Their love for Ireland prompts, and is ever intermingled with, their love for one another.’<sup>273</sup> Though other reviews were not as flattering (the *Southern Star* called it ‘faulty’ in terms of literary value),<sup>274</sup> many reviewers tend to comment on the book’s nationalist-religious themes: the *Freeman’s Journal*, for instance, insists that *The Ring of Day* is ‘an ideally beautiful story of Irish lovers who are full of a deep devotion to God, to country, and to truth.’<sup>275</sup> The frequent inclusion of biblical references, and the manner in which Butler interweaves religious and nationalist language, suggests that Beatrice is an allegorical cross between Kathleen ni Houlihan and the Virgin Mary (O’Gara declares that she will lead him ‘to the gates of heaven’) (*RD* 250). O’Gara, correspondingly, is clearly an abstract Christ figure who is ultimately sacrificed to his ideals: even Eyre notes that Eoin is ‘Ireland incarnate’ (*RD* 283). Not surprisingly, the novel’s tone never achieves the airy optimism of most upper middle-class romance narratives. Instead, the sustained intensity accentuates the

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<sup>273</sup> W.K., ‘The Gaelic League in Fiction’, *The New Ireland Review*, xxvi (1906), 57–58 (p. 57).

<sup>274</sup> ‘Ring of Day (Review, the *Southern Star*)’.

<sup>275</sup> ‘Ring of Day (Review)’, *The Freeman’s Journal*, 1 December 1906, p. 19.

couple's sense of responsibility and service to a larger ideal, subsuming their romance to the needs of the community and nation rather than expressing their individual desire.

Rather than directing their romance toward a standard happy ending and wedding, Butler leads the couple in opposite, but perhaps more idealistic directions from one another. O'Gara dies on an unnamed Western island, reinforcing his role as a saviour figure (he dies of fever after having been fishing with Eyre—an event itself rich in Biblical symbolism). Not unimportantly, his death occurs while Beatrice is traveling through Europe with her uncle Maurice—a statement which suggests Butler's stance against the upper middle-class leaving Ireland in its time of need. It is suggested, however, that Beatrice will marry the socioeconomically appropriate minor character named John Nugent who has loved her from afar. Though the ending is left ambiguous, Butler employs the failed suitor George Eyre to propose that 'a day will come assuredly when she will look kindly on such a man as John Nugent.' Dismissively, he adds that, 'I have often thought how well suited they'd be to each other if she had not taken that other unaccountable idea into her head.'<sup>276</sup> The open-endedness of the narrative allows Butler to suggest a happy ending for Beatrice with a member of her own socioeconomic peer group (she retains an intentional distance from Eyre) while remaining focused on the importance of the couple's unconsummated relationship, leaving them pure for their shared duty to Ireland and to the 'Cause'.

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<sup>276</sup> It is to be noted that in 'The Price', Butler's sequel to *Ring of Day*, which was serialised in *The Sunday Independent*, this ending turns out not to be the case. Instead, Beatrice remains single, devoting herself instead to the nationalist cause and to continuing O'Gara's work. Though Beatrice retains a very secondary role in the sequel, Butler clearly wishes that Beatrice remain a martyr figure for Irish nationalism. Mary E.L. Butler, *The Ring of Day*, p. 343; Mary E.L. Butler, 'The Price', *Sunday Independent*, 10 October 1909, p. 3.

Instead of building a narrative around the specificities of the courting ritual or the couple's shared struggle against obstacles of class and society, Butler's narrative in *The Ring of Day* focuses on the pair's shared devotion to the fight for Irish independence and rural regeneration. Similarly, the relationship between *The French Wife's* upper middle-class protagonists Alison Barnard and Sir Gerard Molyneux allows Katharine Tynan to adapt the romantic narrative in much the same way, this time focusing on the primacy of pastoral care of the Irish peasantry over the couple's romance. Here, the quasi-romantic narrative centres on the shared ideal of the fight against emigration, subordinating passion to philanthropy and the nationalist movement.

As previously noted, after witnessing the consequences of Irish emigration while living in the United States, Molyneux decides upon his return to Ireland to pursue a parliamentary seat so as to use legislation to attempt 'the Herculean task of stopping a nation from bleeding to death and setting it on its feet again' (FW 28). Dividing his time between London, Dublin, and 'Kylinoe', his estate in Ballycushla, Molyneux, though he maintains a close friendship with Alison, is devoted principally to the cause of anti-emigration reform. In a statement that would not be out of place in *Ring of Day*, Molyneux tells Alison that '[m]ine is an exacting service. Dark Rosaleen takes all from her children, even though she only gives them failure and death in return' (FW 99). This tone of altruistic service to an ideal—and to a peasantry, who, as the upper middle-class's 'children', lack agency and subsequently require rescue—echoes *Ring's* nationalist encomium, as well as other upper middle-class novels previously discussed, like Mulholland's *Tragedy of Chris*. Furthermore, Molyneux's statement, while it lacks



Butler's optimism, is not far from the self-sacrificing discourse of Eoin O'Gara, and Molyneux acknowledges, in line with nationalist rhetoric, that his is a thankless job that must be done regardless. And while Alison knows that 'no mortal woman would ever push her out of the central place in his thoughts', she feels obligated to quell her desire to be his mate because, as she tells her housekeeper, she understands that 'the cause is his wife and the people are his children,' (a statement that again underscores the passivity and impuissance of the peasantry) (*FW* 48, 99). Alison, like Beatrice Burke, therefore has no right to be jealous of the object of his devotion. Tynan hints through her protagonists and through comments made by other peripheral characters that Alison and Molyneux are perfectly matched: the neighbouring Mrs Tyrrell, for example, wishes that they could be happy 'the old way', and Molyneux's maid, Mrs Maguire, hopes that Alison will be the lady to 'keep him at home' in Kylinoe, underscoring Tynan's belief in the primacy of women's place within the home rather than on the forefront of political debate (*FW* 20, 63). The couple are nonetheless hindered from pursuing their romance because of their shared dedication to a difficult task.

Unlike Molyneux's national ambitions, Alison's investment remains at the local level within the economic and social well-being of the peasantry surrounding her estate, Castle Barnard. Because of her passion for philanthropy, she is suspected to be on her way to spinsterhood at the age of twenty-six: an older cousin notes that 'she is going the way of not marrying at all', declaring that when 'a woman takes up with all that stuff she's so busy over it very often means that she's cut out for an old maid' (*FW* 26). Like *Ring's* Beatrice, Alison is an independent young woman who takes her responsibility

toward the community seriously, engaging in a wide variety of activities intended to ameliorate the quotidian circumstances of the Ballycushla peasantry so as to stanch the flow of emigrants. Alison, like Beatrice, is routinely criticized for her efforts by her upper middle-class counterparts, one of whom asserts that '[s]he's as mad as he is, [spending] half her time with sewing-classes and lace-classes, and teaching the cottagers how to clean their houses, and village libraries and what not'—a statement that underscores both Alison's maternalism and the peasantry's dependency on the resident upper middle-class (FW 22). Alison's (and Beatrice's) idealism is both encouraged and guided only by her fellow devotee and potential romantic partner, despite the fact that this same idealism prevents the couple from courting. Instead, Alison disregards the constraints of her social position in order to pursue local philanthropy so assiduously, ignoring, at least for a time, the mandatory domesticity which applies to a woman of her class. Mrs. Tyrrell not so subtly informs her that 'the county expects you to marry' (FW 20). In this regard, both Beatrice and Alison could be viewed as author attempts at proto-feminist characters in that they, at least for a period, abandon rules of decorum in order to pursue their public passions.

It is important to note, however, that the two female protagonists, by virtue of their financial status, are at liberty to pursue these passions, endowed as they are with a level of agency unattainable by the female peasantry.<sup>277</sup> Free to shrug off the fetters of social convention and to choose their mates on the basis of emotion rather than on that

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<sup>277</sup> Clear attests to the historical accuracy of this difference between peasant and upper-class marriage, noting that 'women from financially secure backgrounds, if they had congenial and generous parents, could enjoy some freedom in their choice of marriage partner.' Clear, *Social Change and Everyday Life in Ireland, 1850-1922*, p. 84.

of economic necessity, the options available to these two women are completely beyond the scope of those of a lesser economic standing. In any case, both Tynan and Butler's protagonists fall short of achieving their quasi-feminist potential, as each woman in her way fulfils the promise of the marriage plot and subsequently community-oriented philanthropy becomes subordinate to the demands of the domestic sphere. Notably, Alison admits that although she still finds time for 'a good deal of public work', after her inevitable marriage to Molyneux, her priority is to 'revive some of the glories of the great political hostesses of the old days' (FW 125). Tynan's greater interest in storytelling and her acknowledgement of the constraints of the romance plot lead her to ultimately replace the act of caring for the peasantry with caring for children and the domestic sphere.

Even more than the case of *Ring's* Beatrice and Eoin, however, the romantic courtship between Alison and Molyneux is significant by its absence: Alison lacks even Beatrice's brief epiphanic moment of nationalist passion. Instead, Alison and Molyneux's sterile courtship—itself almost a sublimation of other energies rather than the more usual inverse—is evidenced in the following scene when he visits Alison's estate while on business:

The silver moonlight was on her hair, and the aureole that was golden by day was of white light. In her shadowed face the moonlit eyes showed pale altar-fires.

"You are a noble woman, Alison," he said.

“I wish I might give myself to the work as you do,” she answered. (FW 100)

What might seem at first the tone and setting for a romantic scene is, in fact, a discussion of a shared political undertaking set against a backdrop of Catholic imagery.<sup>278</sup> Whereas peasant girl Kitty Donegan emigrates because she is afraid that she will be unable to physically restrain herself from making advances toward a married Timothy Sweeney, upper middle-class figures like Alison and Molyneux are never depicted as suffering from any passions at all. Tynan’s suggestion, then, is that the upper middle-class are above the baser instincts of human nature, reserving their passion for more noble, and altruistic, endeavours (not unlike *The Tragedy of Chris’s Sheelia Ryan*). As touched on previously with regard to Tynan’s ‘How Mary Came Home’, sexuality and passion, when featured in peasant stories, consistently suggests a lack of restraint that inevitably lead to tragedy. Furthermore, as in Catholic anti-emigration tracts, sexuality—particularly when associated with emigration—is routinely linked to danger and eventual moral downfall. This as a consequence of Catholic ideology, upon which nationalist activity is predicated, which all but precludes the concept of a sexualized woman. The fact that upper middle-class romances are reliably passionless, therefore, assures their success and fruitfulness.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of Butler and Tynan’s romance plots for our purposes is that, unlike peasant narratives that feature emigration as the obstacle to

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<sup>278</sup> Innes notes the late-nineteenth century ‘representations of the Virgin Mary as Queen Mother [...] sometimes [feature] the moon’ Innes, p. 41.

romance, for the two couples examined here it is the prevention of emigration that interferes with courtship and marriage. This adaptation of the standard romance narrative demonstrates once again the Catholic nationalist message that personal and economic interests are to be subordinated to collective duty. While Tynan's more nuanced and sophisticated level of storytelling demonstrates her investment in entertaining her readers rather than in simply persuading them (*à la* Butler's more one-dimensional characters and her novel's general lack of subtlety), both anti-emigration narratives serve as one facet of a larger argument for the upper middle-class's responsibility in caring for the peasantry, even if they are uncomprehending or unappreciative of their efforts. Through Peter Bosanquet, one of *The French Wife's* minor characters, Tynan notes with regard to Molyneux's personal sacrifices in the fight against emigration, 'I hope [the peasantry] would remember his unselfish devotion to them' (*FW* 87). Here, unselfish devotion to a romantic partner is roundly replaced by unselfish devotion to an ideal.

One key difference between Butler and Tynan's romance narratives is that Tynan never allows her political leanings to curb her desire to provide her readers with a good story. Unlike Butler's sententious tone and high-flown religious language, Tynan's narratives venture toward a satisfying combination of romance and contemporary politics while avoiding blatant proselytization. By focusing on the good works to be done by the romantic couple (rather than Butler's ardent but vague discussions regarding the fight for independence), Tynan's tone remains optimistic, demonstrating the ways in which shared upper middle-class philanthropy could make Ireland, if not a perfect place,

certainly a more liveable place. Rosa Mulholland—whose authorial interest fell somewhere between Tynan’s more commercial intentions and Butler’s singular political vision—also sought to subordinate the romance narrative to a discussion of social problems in her upper middle-class novels. Like both Tynan and Butler, she frequently frustrated reader’s expectations of romance as well, focusing instead on the couple’s mission to ameliorate the circumstances of the lower classes and the effort to stanch rural emigration. Her plots, however, never extend so far outside convention as to leave their virtuous heroine unmarried, which would certainly be a terrible fate by the logic of the romance genre. Mulholland’s novels conform—at least belatedly and partially—to the romance genre in the end, but their most intriguing aspects lie in those moments where the novels deviate from genre expectations.

Like Butler and Tynan, Mulholland’s upper middle-class novels also frequently feature several variations on this same passionless mentor-pupil romantic pairing that addresses some aspect of nationalist endeavour frequently related to the stemming of emigration. Her novel *A Girl’s Ideal* employs a rare first-person perspective to recount the initially antagonistic relationship between the condescending Dr Dermot MacMurrough and the Irish-American Tabby Chaigneau who uses her inherited fortune to build a poplin factory in Dublin’s derelict Liberties neighbourhood. A project of both urban renewal and stewardship, the factory’s accompanying social programmes (including housing, a fully-staffed infirmary, a dispensary, a pension scheme, and a park) are intended to aid young working-class women coming from the country in search of gainful employment, presumably providing them with economic options other than

emigration. Mulholland also hints at the slippery moral slope met by young women who migrate from idyllic rural Ireland to rough and tumble Dublin and underscores their need for upper middle-class assistance. A local workman, upon learning of Tabby's project, tells her that he knows of

plenty of young girls that come to Dublin an' gets work, and my word to you but afther they've knocked about the city for a year or two they're not as nice as they were when they left the fields. It'll be a God's act to put them in a house like this, an' to be lookin' afther them.<sup>279</sup>

Tabby's project, it is suggested, is almost of a spiritual nature, attempting to save the bodies and souls of young rural migrant women—in much the same way as contemporary Catholic journalism and in longer narratives like Mulholland's defenestration scene in *Father Tim* or Guinan's cautionary tales from his *Scenes and Sketches in an Irish Parish*.

While the upbeat tone of Tabby's humanitarian mission is in keeping with that of other narratives of upper middle-class philanthropy discussed in this chapter, Tabby and Dermot's relationship ranges from antagonistic to absent, as MacMurrough is also committed to a career as a pioneering scientist whose work takes him frequently to London and Paris (as a member of the upper middle-class, his peregrinations pose no ideological problem). As a result, Mulholland attributes to him a fairly secondary role until late in the narrative. Despite Tabby's evident and often-proclaimed independence,

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<sup>279</sup> Mulholland, *A Girl's Ideal*, pp. 303–304.

the couple do eventually admit their feelings for one another. The romantic obstacle, ironically, is Tabby's money, since MacMurrough refuses to marry a woman wealthier than himself, insisting that 'marriage [...] with wealth would spoil his career'; however, once the oil wells behind her inheritance dry up, he proposes, thereby righting the balance of male-female power within the romance narrative.<sup>280</sup> Subsequently, Tabby decides to sell the factory—where the social programmes set in place are ostensibly to be continued in the hands of new owners—and devotes her regained fortune to the construction of a laboratory to support her husband's burgeoning career, again underscoring the premise that one can either care for the lower classes or the domestic sphere, but not both.

*A Fair Emigrant* presents Irish-American Bawn Desmond who sails to her deceased father's natal village in Donegal in search of the truth behind his self-imposed exile. On board ship, she meets Roderick Somerled Fingall, who is returning to Ireland after traveling to America 'in the interest of the emigrants'; not surprisingly, the two eventually arrive at the same destination.<sup>281</sup> As Somerled's sister explains to Bawn, he emigrated because he 'wanted to inform himself thoroughly as to how [the peasantry] are treated on board ship' because, somewhat similarly to Molyneux, he planned on making 'a fuss about it in Parliament.'<sup>282</sup> Though the 'fuss' is never discussed in any detail, Mulholland establishes Fingall as a concerned member of the upper middle-class who is morally invested in improving the well-being of his tenantry. Bawn, meanwhile,

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<sup>280</sup> Mulholland, *A Girl's Ideal*, p. 317.

<sup>281</sup> Rosa Mulholland, *A Fair Emigrant* (New York: D. Appleton, 1896), p. 195.

<sup>282</sup> Mulholland, *A Fair Emigrant*, p. 195.



disguises herself as a humble farmer's daughter (rather than heiress to a sizable fortune amassed in American agriculture) and commits to advancements in the local butter industry, hoping to rival the superior Danish product dominating the Irish market. *Sous-entendu* here is Mulholland's argument—which appears in a number of her novels, as well as Butler's and Tynan's—regarding the purchase of Irish goods to support the economy and stanch the flow of emigrants.<sup>283</sup> To wit, Bawn employs peasant Betty Macalister who, with her daughter Nancy, had considered 'giving up her holding and emigrating' because she could not 'see her way to paying her rent.'<sup>284</sup> This scenario allows Mulholland the opportunity to comment simultaneously on the peasant female's lack of economic opportunity, the evils of abusive landlordism, and the potential good to be done by a member of the middle-class invested in aiding the lower classes.

Though Bawn resolves to keep a distance from Somerled—believing that his family was involved in the accusation of her father of murder—Somerled assures her that 'in spite of your independent spirit and your business capacity, which fit you eminently to stand alone [...] [y]ou may rely on me for service.'<sup>285</sup> Bawn, like most of the upper middle-class protagonists under discussion here, is certainly a prototypical feminist character, possessing, as Lady Flora terms it, 'American audacity and impudence'; she is still reliant on Somerled, however, and not unimportantly, still a

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<sup>283</sup> Somerled explains to Lady Flora that 'the butter that our farmers, especially our small farmers, make, pack, and send abroad, the butter that is to travel and to keep—that is mere money thrown away by those who badly need it, capital sunk in the sea, treasure which is our national inheritance dropped into our neighbours' pockets.' Mulholland, *A Fair Emigrant*, pp. 219–220.

<sup>284</sup> Mulholland, *A Fair Emigrant*, p. 149.

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid*, p. 244.

marriageable character because she is secretly of upper middle-class stock.<sup>286</sup> While Mulholland's story is replete with romantic tension, and the Bawn-Somerled pairing is simply a matter of time, Mulholland stalls it through the romantic obstacle (Bawn's search for the truth behind her father's exile) and through Bawn's ambitions as an independent businesswoman. As an upper middle-class novel, the peasants—limited largely to Betty and Nancy Macalister—remain in the background of philanthropic efforts made on their behalf, demonstrating that although Mulholland has a better understanding of the socioeconomic pressures facing the rural peasant female than the other writers under consideration here, her primary concern is still in satisfying readerly expectations with a traditional romantic ending.

Other examples of passionless but well-intentioned romance include Marcella and the neighbouring Bryan Kilmartin in Mulholland's upper middle-class novel *Marcella Grace* (1885) who are bound by their love and their shared commitment to the fight for independence and tenant proprietorship.<sup>287</sup> Similarly, the eponymous protagonist of Mulholland's *Giannetta: A Girl's Story of Herself* (1901) and the neighbouring Pierce Kirwin, comprehending the socioeconomic ramifications of eviction and emigration of the peasants surrounding their estates, seek to save the peasantry through the establishment of programmes to promote home industries and tenant proprietorship.<sup>288</sup>

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<sup>286</sup> Ibid, p. 252.

<sup>287</sup> *Marcella Grace* was initially published in the *Irish Monthly* throughout the year 1885 and then republished in book form in 1886. All references here are to *the Irish Monthly* version. Rosa Mulholland, *Marcella Grace. An Irish Novel* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Co, 1886). Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text as *MG*.

<sup>288</sup> Rosa Mulholland, *Giannetta* (London: Blackie and Son, 1901). Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text as *G*.

In each case, the narrative is largely devoid of romantic language and focuses instead on the mentor-mentee relationship and on the good works to be executed by each couple on behalf of the peasantry. As with Butler and Tynan's marriage plots, romance is subordinated to the upper middle-class's sense of responsibility to the novel's noble cause, and each pair's courtship is a non-event.

Though each of the authors discussed here treats the theme slightly differently, all three are committed to the idea of adapting the traditional marriage trope so as to demonstrate to their upper middle-class readership their moral obligation to end large-scale peasant emigration. The peasantry, by contrast, are almost entirely silent and passive—reliant, economically and morally, on the Catholic upper middle-class, who, at least the well-intentioned romantic couples, have their best interests at heart. There are two primary characteristics accounting for the commercial success of these novels (at least those of Tynan and Mulholland): first, the creation of a sympathetic upper middle-class character who, by virtue of her good intentions, as well as her natural physical attractiveness and grace, deserves to find love. Second, the depiction of an ennobled peasantry who are the grateful recipients of the upper middle-class's moral guidance and philanthropy. The couple thus overcome the obstacles that divide them and achieve a happy ending—which includes ameliorated conditions for their tenantry.

### **Emigration and peasant romance**

Like the all-but-absent romantic passion between upper middle-class characters, romance between peasants is also displaced but for different reasons. The courtship between peasant protagonists points up the economic realities of rural matches: unlike upper middle-class protagonist women who are presented with a variety of choices in terms of mates or courses of action, as the plot of *The Ring of Day* in particular suggests, peasant protagonists lack the social and economic resources to make those same decisions. Instead, the works discussed here reveal—and in many cases emphasise—the lack of options open to peasant women, stressing the ways in which emigration disturbs the traditional marriage plot structure and demonstrates its potential to interrupt the possibility of a happy marriage and thus a happy ending.

Emigration and marriage intersect in two primary ways in the peasant fiction under discussion. Here, the more common scenario is one where successful courtship and marriage, and the socioeconomic benefits that ostensibly accompany it, serve as the recompense for a female protagonist who remains loyal to Ireland, leaving only under duress. Conversely, the happy ending (and happy marriage) is often thwarted for the emigrant who chooses to leave, signalling the ways in which emigration unsettles the 'natural order' of peasant domesticity and underscores the normative ideology of the importance of the immobile female. In either case, the placement of emigration within the traditional romance narrative disturbs the conventional plotting, signalling an inherent conflict between (desired) marriage and emigration, thus supporting a larger anti-emigration narrative. The expected fulfilment of romantic desire that drives the

narrative and engages the reader, when realised, demonstrates the domestic possibilities open to self-sacrificing protagonists; when thwarted, it underscores the idea that peasant women's emigration, as one of even a small number of choices, will always be the wrong choice.

In the works noted below, women who are obligated to emigrate for marriage as an aspect of a domestic or social duty, and are loath to leave and/or wish to return, are often rewarded with economic abundance (Eily in Tynan's 'The Whistling Thief', Bridget in Tynan's 'An Emigrant', Molly in 'A Returned Emigrant', Hannah in Tynan's *The House of the Crickets*, both Bess Dermody and Mary in Mulholland's *The Return of Mary O'Murrough*, and Kate in Cummins' *The Land They Loved*). Furthermore, women who insist on remaining in Ireland—regardless of the socioeconomic benefit that emigration would bring to the couple—are duly rewarded (Mulholland's *Norah of Waterford*). By contrast, tragedy routinely befalls a peasant female protagonist who wishes to leave Ireland, suggesting that choosing to emigrate is unnatural (Mulholland's *The Tragedy of Chris*), even when on the pretext of marriage (Tynan's 'How Mary Came Home'). This distinction between the protagonist's desiring to leave and being obligated to leave renders emigration either the selfish action of individual women or a regretful—though necessary—course of events in the life of the peasant couple. This is true particularly for Mulholland and Cummins, whose realism engages more fully with social realities of the time. In either case, the woman's decision will either reinforce or upset the social order, leading to nationalist message made manifest in the elevation of the domestic sphere or the condemnation of rural depopulation.

### Katharine Tynan

In 1915's 'The Whistling Thief' an omniscient narrator recounts how the protagonist couple are initially separated as the result of a lovers' quarrel. In a fit of pique, Patrick Sullivan enlists as a soldier, leaves, and is killed in action. Eily Driscoll, consequently, is left in economic hardship with her aging and disabled mother, forced to concentrate her energies at 'sprigging'<sup>289</sup> to keep the wolf from their door.'<sup>290</sup> Her only other means of supporting them (and one to which her mother would willingly consent) is through marrying 'Michael Doyle, the elderly widower who was her persistent admirer.'<sup>291</sup> Tynan, however, characterises the potential partner as a 'dreadful alternative' to the Driscoll women's life of financial precarity, underscoring once again the distasteful but common necessity of the rural mercenary match and suggesting that the women's only remaining option is emigration.<sup>292</sup>

When Eily receives an invitation to join her brother Bill in New York, the possibility of emigration allows her a way to escape both the proposed match and her state of penury. Once she and her mother arrive, however (carrying a pot of shamrocks in their baggage as a talisman of imported Ireland), they learn that they have been brought to America to work as 'unpaid nurses' for her brother's 'spoilt and sickly' children—a statement recalling 'A Benefactor's' Mr Adair's young son, also a victim of

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<sup>289</sup> A type of handwork.

<sup>290</sup> Tynan, *Countrymen All*, p. 114.

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid*, p. 115.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid*.

the physically and morally unhealthy urban sphere.<sup>293</sup> Eily instantly ‘regret[s] that she had not tried to battle it out in Ireland somehow’ recalling ‘how heavenly, seen at a distance, seemed little kindly Cooldrina, despite all the sorrows she had suffered there!’, harnessing the bucolic ‘Holy Ireland’ rhetoric common to the authors in this study who routinely contend that, regardless of the dire conditions facing rural peasant women, emigration will never present a better solution.<sup>294</sup>

Confined to a garret room with her increasingly-infirm mother, Eily eventually hears the familiar whistle of her beloved Patrick who, as it turns out, had not been killed in battle but had merely been missing. Having searched for her throughout the city of New York, the pair are soon married and, with the money that Patrick had saved, return to Ireland to set up house with Eily’s mother. Though the couple exchange a mere handful of words throughout the story (Tynan’s emphasis being on the precarity of the couple’s romance due to the economic necessity of Eily’s emigration rather than on the romance itself), Tynan rewards the couple’s steadfastness to one another and to their shared desire to establish a homestead in rural Ireland. This she specifically juxtaposes with the economic opportunities available to the couple abroad, as expressed through Eily’s wealthy but miserable brother who remains cowed by his shrewish wife. Instead, Eily’s fealty to her mother throughout their shared ordeal demonstrates Tynan’s emphasis on domestic responsibility and underscores Eily’s worthiness of a reward of marriage and a materially beneficial return to Ireland.

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<sup>293</sup> Ibid, p. 120.

<sup>294</sup> Ibid, pp. 118, 119.

Similarly, Tynan's short story 'An Emigrant' (1895) recounts the tale of Bridget, who lost out on an economically advantageous match with the avaricious Patrick Riordan due to her insistence that her grandmother live with them. With no economically beneficial match on the horizon, Bridget fears that the pair 'couldn't pull through another winter here' and is therefore obligated, like Eily Driscoll, to emigrate, hoping that she will be able to support her grandmother through remittances or even eventually send for her.<sup>295</sup> Like *The French Wife's* Kitty Donegan, Bridget insists on leaving home despite the protests of those around her, even refusing, like Kitty, to listen to the entreaties of the parish priest. When about to board ship, however, Bridget experiences an epiphany and turns back, realising 'how lonely the big world was, an' I was goin' into it alone, an' laving lonely the wan soul that belonged to me'; she quickly comes to the conclusion that 'nothin' matters as long as you're at home, and not lonely among black strangers'.<sup>296</sup> Tynan's repetition of the words 'lonely' and 'alone' serve to emphasise the image of the isolated emigrant female, her familial responsibility, and contrast the 'black' dangerous exterior with the safety of the domestic sphere. Bridget decides, finally, to weather economic hardship and remain in Ireland with her grandmother, thereby earning a compensatory marriage to the promising love interest Michael O'Donnell (a minor character with whom she has had little contact before her departure) and a subsequent happy ending.

From the same collection of stories, Tynan's 'A Returned Emigrant' (1908) tells of Molly Grady who, jilted by Dan Tobin for 'Sarah Gilsenan, the rich spinster', leaves her

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<sup>295</sup> Katharine Tynan, *The Land of Mist and Mountain* (London: Unwin Bros., 1895), p. 16.

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 18, 35.



mother for Derry to board a ship for America, with the intention of supporting her through remittances and eventually sending for her. Tynan stipulates that her mother is 'a clean Northern peasant', a phrase indicative of Tynan's desire to positively depict her Irish peasant characters for her British readership.<sup>297</sup> Like Bridget, she experiences a change of heart, deciding that she would be a 'great fool [...] to be goin' over the world for Dan Tobin's sake, an' I wid the best little mother in Christendom.'<sup>298</sup> Disembarking, she happens upon the boy who drove her to Derry, Willie McGroarty, who has come to see her off with a pot of shamrocks as a going-away gift. Molly declares that she has had her 'fill of emigration' and returns to the Grady farm with the suggestion that her match will be made with young McGroarty.<sup>299</sup> Though Tynan acknowledges the dearth of options for young rural women and their ambivalence regarding emigration, Tynan's remarks remain on a surface level, serving merely to provide a romantic obstacle, and the narrative's tone, like those above, remains optimistic throughout. In a variation from the stories discussed above, this accidental thwarting of emigration rewards both protagonists with a compensatory happy ending; however, both stories hint at a narrowly-escaped cautionary message about what could be lost upon emigration: for Bridget, it is specifically her 'fear of the big world' that drives her decision to stay.<sup>300</sup> Most importantly, Tynan rewards Molly's fidelity to family over individual ambition and potential economic recompense to be gained through emigration; stories where the

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<sup>297</sup> Katharine Tynan, *Men and Maids; or, the Lovers' Way* (Dublin: Sealy, Bryers & Walker, 1908), pp. 148, 156.

<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 158.

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 159.

<sup>300</sup> Tynan, *The Land of Mist and Mountain*, p. 35.

female protagonist neglects her domestic responsibilities, by contrast, tend to take on the tone of a cautionary tale.

As already discussed, Tynan's eponymous protagonist in 'How Mary Came Home' seeks to shed her responsibility to her brothers and leaves with the Spaniard Jacopo, only to be abandoned once away from home. Tynan's suggestion through Mary's predicament is that Jacopo, as both a foreigner and an instigator of this romantic passion, presents a detrimental influence on both on the community's homeostasis and on Mary—particularly once Mary is beyond the reach of her brothers' guiding hand. The dissolution of their marriage and the death of her infant son further reflect the broader themes of rural depopulation and the emigrant's sense of isolation and helplessness. By the story's end, however, despite its consistently sombre tone, Mary speaks with conviction: 'snatch[ing] the ring from her finger suddenly and hurl[ing] it out in the tossing waters', she swears to her brother that "'Now I'm Mary Cassidy again [...] and the women that left you is dead'" ('Mary' 83). The resolve with which she makes this statement suggests, on the one hand, that women who seek emigration as a means of escape may well be doomed to fail, but on the other hand, Mary registers—in a radical departure from much of Mulholland's work that follows the standard recipe for romance narrative—an adamant stance regarding women's potential for living without it.

Due perhaps to the fact that Mulholland seems to have been committed to the idea of the social problem of emigration and Butler saw it purely as a political issue, Tynan was the only one of the writers discussed in this study who went so far as to

couch emigration as a means of escape from the oppression of family and domestic obligation. Paradoxically, however, all evidence (including the first short stories discussed above and a large portion of both her journalism and her memoirs) would lead one to believe that Tynan was dedicated to the priority of women's domestic responsibility. In the case of the sisters in the following novel, *The House of the Crickets*, Tynan justifies the idea of emigration as escape in light of the extenuating circumstances she creates for her protagonists. While Mulholland is loath to grace emigration even as a relief from one's dire domestic conditions, Tynan—in the rare case—allows emigration as a way of seeking personal redemption.

Much of Tynan's work features the themes of jilted lovers and romantic disappointment (as exemplified by 'How Mary Came Home' and other short stories like 'The Wardrobe' and 'May Day').<sup>301</sup> Perhaps this is due to her own experience in what has been suggested was a less-than-perfect marriage to Hinkson,<sup>302</sup> or perhaps the short story form extended her a greater flexibility to explore the minutia of the dreary realism of rural marriages without bowing to the constraints of novel-length romance narrative. In either case, unlike Mulholland and Butler's frequently one-dimensional, often voiceless peasant characters, even in longer works, like *The House of the Crickets*, Tynan creates women characters who are multi-layered rather than merely falling into a 'type',

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<sup>301</sup>Tynan, *The Handsome Quaker and Other Stories*; Tynan, *Countrymen All*.

<sup>302</sup> In a letter from Elizabeth (Lolly) Yeats to her father, she tells him that 'drink has [Hinkson] by the hand' and that Tynan was working excessively due to their 'great deal of debt'. Furthermore, Napier notes that Hinkson 'is almost entirely absent from her memoirs [and] the reader is aware of [his] death only because Tynan ceases to refer to him in [her memoir] *The Years of Shadow*'. Elizabeth Yeats, 'Letter to John Butler Yeats' (Dublin, 1914), Ms 31, 12(23), National Library of Ireland; Taura S Napier, *Seeking a Country: Literary Autobiographies of Twentieth-Century Irishwomen* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2001), p. 63. My thanks to Janet Wallwork for this manuscript.

while at the same time examining the narrow socio-economic straits in which they are forced to function.

Katharine Tynan's 1908 peasant novel *The House of the Crickets* depicts two sisters on either side of very different romance narratives, presenting an interesting variation on the theme of tragedy following emigration. Twenty-year-old Julia Moore leaves home in order to flee an abusive father, crushing poverty, and an arranged marriage to Joe Brady, an elderly farmer to whom her family is heavily indebted. Unbeknownst to her family, she becomes pregnant by Stephen Scudamore, a gentry friend of the family's landlord, and on the eve of her wedding day to the elderly farmer, escapes with him to England. Julia is a more ambiguous character than any of the other female protagonists under examination here, and certainly not a standard leading character: Tynan characterises her at turns as both shrewd and full of 'sneering and jeering malice'.<sup>303</sup> Rather than experiencing a tragic ending similar to that which befalls the aforementioned Mary, Julia actually succeeds in marrying Scudamore (now Lord Arbuthnot), living in England, and availing herself of all the material advantages corresponding to her role as Lady Arbuthnot. When she serendipitously encounters her younger sister, Hannah, some years later in England, she affirms that she has never experienced the slightest sentiment of duty or regret in the way in which she shamed her family by running away on her wedding day. When Hannah asks her '[d]o you know what they have been thinking of you all these years?' Julia answers flatly, 'As though it

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<sup>303</sup> Katharine Tynan, *The House of the Crickets* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1908), p. 2. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text as *HC*.

mattered! A lot of ignorant yokels. They would have thought it promotion for me to marry that yellow old wretch' (HC 287). The language with which she expresses Julia's vitriol exposes Tynan's own feelings about mercenary matches among rural peasants but also tends to more readily excuse Julia's outspokenness and lack of decorum now that she possesses upper middle-class status.

Despite the untoward beginnings of her relationship with Scudamore, Julia's is a surprisingly enduring romance. She tells Hannah that despite her pregnancy

I never expected Stephen to marry me. I'm not a bit ashamed, even now, of having gone away with him. What did it matter what people thought? Who would have respected me if I had married Joe Brady? [...] To be sure, Stephen was bound to marry me sooner or later. He was too much in love with me to leave me free. (HC 285-286)

Tynan's wording here is interesting in that, for Julia, the alternative to this 'romance' is being 'left free', which, given her casual attitude toward her husband, could seem preferable. Tynan's tone seems to be ambivalent at best: although Julia expresses pride in Scudamore's love for her, there is also some implication of its confining and circumscribing effects on her existence.

Julia is an anti-heroine, and Tynan marks her as a kind of antagonist to her sister Hannah, who represents the more traditional, passive protagonist akin to Mulholland's Norah. Remarks like these from Julia suggest that she functions as a sort of *raisonneur* or truth teller who plants the seed of doubt as to the theme of the worthy protagonist

who earns the reward; she also serves as a foil to provoke tension in Hannah's otherwise straightforward romance scenario. Given Tynan's devotion to the idea of women's place within the domestic sphere, we cannot assume that the very un-domestic Julia could be speaking for Tynan herself. She does possess a certain authority, however, and her outspokenness renders her important, if not sympathetic. She, like Mary (from 'How Mary Came Home'), serves as an example of what not to be, if not to do. Unlike Mary, however, Julia has found the lifestyle she sought beyond Ireland's shores at an intentional distance from her family.

Hannah, by contrast, contemplates 'escaping to the Convent'—though not out of religious motivation but as one of the few options open to her as a poor farmer's daughter (*HC* 10). Eventually she is taken in by the nuns to be trained as a singer and subsequently moves to England to perform professionally; while there, she reencounters and wins the love of her family's landlord's inheriting son, Hilary O'Daly, whom she has loved from afar. The pair return to their native village of Dunveagh, and Hannah (now upper middle-class) remains loyal to her family, acting as steward for her brother Michael who is unable to marry his true love because he lacks the economic resources. Hannah is the positive example, the theme upon which Julia is a variation: while Julia, Tynan tells us, 'had a way of trampling upon the flowers of life and the spirit', Hannah, by contrast, seeks to return home so that she can 'do her duty to [her physically and verbally abusive father] before he died' (*HC* 303, 302). These contradictory characterisations exemplify the anti-emigration ethos of duty (particularly to the family) over self-interest and material profit; that Tynan rewards characters on

both sides of this contradiction is certainly exceptional in that the vast majority of Tynan's female protagonists find happiness and domestic success only upon returning home, thereby ensuring the reader a satisfying, optimistic ending.

Julia's tale is significant in that once again it signals Tynan's proto-feminist sentiment with regard to the rejection of rural arranged marriages among peasants (*à la* Mary in 'How Mary Came Home'). In an early conversation, Julia and Hannah discuss their parents' desire that Julia marry Joe Brady; Julia insists that 'If I was to marry him, I'd just put my two hands round his throat and strangle him' (HC 30). While Tynan makes it clear that Julia is fully aware of the pressures facing rural women who otherwise have few options, Julia's case exposes Tynan's class bias in that, by escaping with a man of a higher class standing (rather than a louche Spanish fisherman), both Julia and Hannah can access a happy ending regardless of their initial circumstances. Although both Mary and Julia demonstrate a large degree of personal initiative to flee their bleak domestic circumstances, only Julia is so calculating as to deliberately strategize for her future well-being. Julia's happy ending—unlike Hannah's—is not the result of personal integrity or inherent goodness (Tynan's narrative voice regularly suggests that Julia is meant to be neither liked nor emulated by readers), but merely the fruits of a match that reinforces the social order through class ascendancy.

That Tynan should create a female protagonist who feels at liberty to flout society and defy the male tutelage model of courtship demonstrates the potential in her work to explore non-traditional roles for women even within the constraints of the

romance narrative. Hannah notes, for example, the way Julia's husband would 'wince under her tongue as though she had flicked a whip across his face. He took it patiently as though it was something he deserved [...] yet he was head over ears in love with her' (HC 303-304). While the novel is more focused on the events surrounding Hannah, Julia and her story are far more complex, rendering Hannah little more than a more standard Cinderella character. In the hands of Rosa Mulholland, it is difficult to believe that a character like Julia would be allowed such a happy ending, judging from unsuitable women like *Norah of Waterford's* Sabina Doolan, who, because of her decision to emigrate, can only be eligible for a supporting character role to more traditional heroines like Norah. Tynan is the only author under examination here who explores these tensions within the standard romance formula, creating an anomalous figure who is rewarded, both domestically and economically, while neither returning to Ireland nor fulfilling family duty. While Mulholland sticks faithfully to a fairly typical version of the romance formula, the figure of Julia demonstrates that Tynan's ideology doesn't fall in lock step with anti-emigration propaganda. Furthermore, she alone of the writers discussed in this chapter explores the relationship of the romantic couple with any specificity, which demonstrates her prioritisation of the literary over the didactic.

### **Rosa Mulholland**

Limited by the romance genre which presupposes a happy ending for commendable heroines, Mulholland gives us more examples of women rewarded for loyalty than punished for ambition. *Norah of Waterford*, in a slight contrast to the stories discussed above, serves as an example of the rewards available to women who resist the



temptation to emigrate for marriage. Mulholland's story traces the romance between the heavily-indebted farmer, Joe Aherne, and Norah Fitzgerald, herself the eldest daughter in a recently-evicted family. While the narrative engages with the economic realities facing young rural couples, Mulholland nonetheless acquiesces to a quasi-fairy-tale ending with the couple's loyalty to one another and to their community rewarded by the *deus ex machina* of returnee wealth (Foster notes that Sabina Doolan 'turns out to be the good fairy').<sup>304</sup> Norah is consequently rewarded with marriage, money, and a farm for not having emigrated, and saves not only herself but her evicted family as well. The couple's courtship, however—particularly for what could only be called a romance novel—is almost non-existent; the exigencies of their financial situations instead take centre stage. To wit, there is little interaction and almost no romantic language exchanged between Joe and Norah, and the novel's prevailing tone is one of desperation. Here, the romantic obstacle, rather than emigration specifically, is the economic reality faced by the couple.

*The Return of Mary O'Murrough* once again demonstrates the dearth of options for young women with regard to marriage and emigration, focusing on the financial aspects of the rural match. Here, Bess Dermody and Miles Donohoe are a young couple who wish to marry but lack the means to establish a household. Bess's mother, who owns a small farm, forbids the match because Miles is a labourer, and instead attempts to match Bess with Peter 'Foxy' Flynn, a much older neighbour with a desirable property. Eventually, Bess chooses to emigrate with Miles in order to find economic

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<sup>304</sup> John Foster, p. 178.

stability without acquiescing to a mercenary match. Despite the fact that even the parish priest is resigned to the material necessity of the couple's emigration and attempts to convince Bess's mother to bless the union, she finally cuts ties with her daughter, telling her that

I'll not deny you my blessin' [...] but it's little good to wish you well. You could ha' been well here, an' y' chose to go. Y've done yer own business in spite o' me. Y've made yer bed, an' y' must lie on it. (*RMO* 273)

Though Bess repeatedly refuses to marry Miles without her mother's approval (demonstrating Bess's acknowledgment of and obedience to familial duty), the couple eventually marry, and emigrate, without it. While we are told at the story's dénouement that the couple do not regret their decision to emigrate and are happy in their lives abroad, the lingering resentment between mother and daughter—and the couple's permanent move away from their native village—renders the couple's decision bittersweet. This enduring domestic conflict tempers what is an otherwise happy ending for Bess in terms of romance, economics, and fecundity.

As has been previously discussed, *The Tragedy of Chris's* eponymous peasant character is initially tempted to emigrate to London by the potential of increased earnings as a flower seller. Though Mulholland resists delving into the details of Chris's moral downfall, once she falls into vice, she is clearly beyond resurrection. Importantly, however, the language with which Mulholland describes Chris suggests that she resists blaming her for leaving: she consistently refers to Chris as a child, echoing contemporary

anti-emigration propaganda that infantilized emigrant females. Finally, Chris, much like *Norah of Waterford's* Sabina, can only serve as the catalyst for the passionless romance between Sheelia Ryan and Connor O'Daly, whose courtship consists of wandering the London streets together at night in search for the missing girl. Given Sheelia's dedication in her mission to find Chris, she never even considers the possibility of a romantic engagement with O'Daly until he proposes marriage. When he does propose, she reflects that he 'had been the truest friend, the most faithful comrade, but so delicately had his service been rendered that it had never looked like the devotion of a lover' (TC 297). Again, with Mulholland's traditional approach to the romance narrative, the possibility for courtship and love only exists for the nobler of the two women (Sheelia is, after all, secretly gentry and therefore impervious to temptation). Sheelia's romance, marriage, return to Ireland, and inheritance—in short, her happy ending—is rooted in her sense of duty in searching for Chris, underscoring Mulholland's belief in the merits of self-sacrificing service and duty.

### **Geraldine Cummins**

Though relatively few years separate Mulholland's *Chris* from Geraldine Cummins' *The Land They Loved*, the two women's treatment of the female protagonist reflects great differences in the authors' ethos with regard to responsibility and blame and the way in which each affects the romance narrative. Far from the peasant/gentry dichotomy that underscores most of the works discussed in this study—and the moral qualities attributable only to upper middle-class protagonists, as in the case of Sheelia Ryan—

Cummins' peasant protagonist, though once an eager emigrant, is still deserving of romance and a happy ending. Like Butler's Beatrice Burke, however, the language of Kate Carmody's romance will be subverted to a larger nationalist discourse regarding duty to the land.

Geraldine Cummins' peasant novel *The Land They Loved* features the standard elements of a romance narrative, linking an initial thwarted match to her protagonist's emigration. Kate Carmody, motivated by her 'wild free spirit,' has given her two potential suitors 'the slip, making off to America', and returns to find that both men—brothers on the neighbouring farm—have been killed (*TLTL* 5, 6). The tone and language with which Cummins captures her sense of regret at having left, coupled with her disillusion upon viewing recurring images of rural paralysis and post-World War One emptiness, suggest severely limited chances for a happy ending. In what is the most detailed discussion of fiscal realities facing women in any fictional work in this study, Kate realises that, outside of a successful match, she possesses few economic options, and recognises that she will be incapable of buying and running the farm of her dreams without a domestic partner. Kate does eventually succeed in finding both happiness and the economic and social benefits of marriage with the deceased suitors' younger brother, Eugene. Together they, like many other couples discussed here, embark on a largely unromantic courtship, the language of their romance being supplanted by discussions of their shared mission of rural progress. Like other depictions of peasant women discussed in this study, Cummins constantly reminds us that Kate is limited by both her gender and her socioeconomic status; unlike other female protagonists,

however, Kate's fate is not connected to sentiments of familial duty but rather to finding her own place within that national narrative. While *The Land They Loved* is certainly a nationalist encomium to post-war Ireland, Cummins' romance never loses sight of the political realities of the period and, unlike most of the peasant protagonists examined in this chapter, recognises women's right to be independent and mobile.

In these works, the authors frequently deny themselves the more marketable and easier theme of fulfilled romantic love and obstacles overcome, thus also denying their readers more easily-consumable pleasures. Instead, often at the risk of ideological bluntness, as is the case with Butler particularly, these authors create protagonists who (in upper middle-class fiction) engage with more purposeful endeavours than in most standard romance novels: rather than lose themselves in romantic desire, they find purpose in philanthropy and pursue it as a way to self-fulfilment. Only in upper middle-class fiction, however, does this result in purposeful activity outside of the home; the class-based double standard reveals that in peasant fiction—with the exception of Cummins—individual aspiration is still supplanted by domestic duty. Narratives featuring peasant protagonists focus more frequently on the socioeconomic limitations associated with emigration, the tone and style with which their romance is portrayed revealing women's often bleak social reality and their lack of alternatives.

## **Conclusion**

The authors discussed here succeed in adapting romance plot—a form of narrative which was generally expected of women writers of popular *fin-de-siècle* fiction—to their

own political and ideological ends. While the theme of the fulfilled duty being rewarded by domestic harmony and wealth is not associated exclusively with the genre of anti-emigration fiction, the coupling of reward or punishment with emigration and return can, as we have seen here, prove particularly effective as a literary strategy. While not all of the aforementioned authors seek to categorically vilify those women who emigrate—particularly not in more realist works, such as those by Mulholland and Cummins—the majority of the stories’ treatment of the peasant protagonist clearly suggests that women who strive to remain or to return to Ireland and to their domestic roots are rewarded, and those who seek to serve their own interests before those of the family and community inevitably suffer the consequences of their actions.

The next chapter examines the twin metaphors of ‘land’ and ‘soil’, once again pointing up the link between rural peasant identity and geographic placement. The authors to be discussed continue the theme of ‘Holy’ Ireland, and while they acknowledge the negative aspects of rural life, they nonetheless underscore nationalist discourse that rewards the peasant who remains loyal to the land.

## Chapter Five: Land and Soil

While marriage frequently serves as a way into a happy ending in narratives of peasant return, one central aspect of the successful return is an attachment to land and its ownership. In this context, the concept of land is always depicted as positive and idealized, as we have seen in the nationalist discourse upon which these novels draw—particularly when reflected against the act of emigration and the destination from which the emigrant is returning. This chapter, which deals primarily with later and more realist writers, complicates this idea: here, when these writers depict the land in relation to the peasants' experience, the realities surface, often revealing a different and fuller perspective on the peasants' predicament. The works discussed in this chapter still tend to be directed at an upper middle-class readership and thus take a didactic stance. They do, however, increasingly engage with the social issues dealing specifically with the husbandry of the land suffering under-investment and discontinuity, revealing in many cases the antithesis of the nationalist image of 'Holy' Ireland or Ireland as the Promised Land.

This chapter examines depictions of land within anti-emigration fiction. It is to be expected that the idea of land—both in the sense of 'soil', that is, an idealised space that served nationalist discourses, and in the sense of 'land', as the actual or economic, geographic space—should be central to Irish literature of this period (whether or not that literature carries specific Revival characteristics) and to literature that represents emigration in particular. The centrality of land as a literary theme to the works in

question then is unremarkable; however, more than simply as eulogy to the bucolic backdrop against which to paint the Irish peasant, the theme of land served as a powerful political vehicle for nationalist writers. Seamus Deane echoes this idea when he asserts that while land is a ‘political-legal entity’, the concept of soil is both a ‘material-metaphysical possession’ and a ‘political notion stripped, by strategy of sacralisation, of all economic and commercial reference’.<sup>305</sup> The Revival-era writers discussed here regularly employed, in differing ways, the concepts of soil and land as a central plank of their political discourse.

As merely one example of this phenomenon, some of Padraic Colum’s earliest plays, notably *The Broken Soil* (1903) and *The Land* (1905), both address chiefly themes of emigration (a central aspect of the economics of ‘land’) and duty to the ‘soil’ (-as-nation)—in both tales emigration is invariably depicted as tragedy, if not for the emigrant him or herself, for the peasants who remain in a landscape made moribund by emigration.<sup>306</sup> Colum and his nationalist contemporaries sought to make use of the image of the exiled rural tenant in order to further a political agenda that centred on the importance of the physical presence of the peasant on the land. Naturally, the association between the peasantry and the land (in the sense of both soil and land)—and the suggestion of the peasant’s duty to remain on it—presents a key strategy in

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<sup>305</sup> Seamus Deane, ‘Land & Soil: A Territorial Rhetoric’, *History Ireland*, 2 (1994), 31–34 (p. 31).

<sup>306</sup> Colum notes that “‘The Land’ also dealt with a movement that ran counter to the rooting of the Celtic people in the soil—emigration—the emigration to America of the young and the fit. In “The Land” I tried to show that it was not altogether an economic necessity that was driving young men and women out of the Irish rural districts; the lack of life and the lack of freedom there had much to do with emigration.’ Padraic Colum, *Three Plays* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1916), p. vii. Padraic Colum, *Selected Plays of Padraic Colum*, Irish Studies, 1st ed (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1986), p. x.



both fiction and nonfiction writing against emigration. The way that that strategy has been shaped, however, has depended both on the author's political motivation and on his or her authorial choices in representing Ireland's political climate in fiction, both of which suggest the degree to which he or she seeks to persuade or to entertain her reader.

This chapter focuses specifically on the ways in which Revival-era authors employ the trope of soil as a way into larger discussions of land and land issues and conflicts that led to emigration, as well as the effects of emigration on the landscape. Here I address three common themes: depopulation, eviction, and landlordism (landlordism, as opposed to simply 'being a landlord', suggests an abuse of power by a landowner in view of his tenantry; the *Oxford English Dictionary* stipulates that the term landlordism is 'chiefly used with reference to Ireland').<sup>307</sup> Within these broad categories, I will tease out some of the details behind the authors' motivation for creating scenes of pathos that reflect an anti-emigration rhetoric. First, I will look at the theme of rural depopulation in the journalism and fiction of Rosa Mulholland and the fiction of Mary Butler, Katharine Tynan, and Geraldine Cummins. Second, I will discuss the ways in which Tynan and Mulholland employ highly emotional depictions of peasant eviction in order to create a causal relationship between emigration and loss of land and livelihood. Third, I investigate the trope of the landlord and the ways in which his depiction—one so fraught in Irish peasant fiction—can be constructed positively when established in

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<sup>307</sup> 'Landlordism, N.: Oxford English Dictionary' <<http://0-www.oed.com.pugwash.lib.warwick.ac.uk/view/Entry/105492?redirectedFrom=landlordism>> [accessed 18 September 2013].

the context of upper middle-class fiction (Mulholland, Butler, and Tynan). Last, I examine Geraldine Cummins' 1919 work *The Land They Loved* and the way in which, in a slightly different time period and socioeconomic setting from earlier Revivalist writers, the tropes of soil and land remain of vital importance in discussions of emigration and domestic duty (a theme which harks back, though quite differently, to the discourse of Mary Butler). Looking at the recurrent employment of the themes of both soil and land allows us to trace the stylistic and ideological links between anti-emigration writing in fictional works and in the Catholic and nationalist popular press, and points up the ways in which anti-emigration messages varied in relation to class and gender.

### **Historical context**

The works in question demonstrate what Vera Kreilkamp refers to as the 'complex relationship between historical and fictional narratives' at the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>308</sup> While the theme of land has long been fodder for Irish fiction, a series of important political and social changes occurring after the Famine and leading up to independence proved central to peasants' physical relationship with land. The land acts of the later nineteenth century were a series of laws aimed in many ways at placating struggling tenant farmers and deterring them from taking what was becoming an increasingly aggressive stance against absentee landlords. The 1870 Land Act, and particularly those elements which came to be referred to as the 'Bright Clauses', introduced terms by which tenant farmers could purchase land formerly rented to them

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<sup>308</sup> Vera Kreilkamp, 'Fiction and Empire: The Irish Novel', in *Ireland and the British Empire*, ed. by Kevin Kenny (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press), pp. 154–81 (p. 168).

by landlords. Successive bills, ending with the 1903 Wyndham Act and the 1909 Birrell Act, proposed financially advantageous circumstances under which landlords were encouraged (and then obligated) to sell entire estates. These measures were seen by the Gladstone government as a way to retain a measure of control and avoid an independent Ireland; for nationalists, peasant ownership was seen as a way to stem emigration and to ameliorate the economic circumstances of farmers but without fully answering their calls for political autonomy. However, as Kerby Miller observes, ‘despite the late-nineteenth-century Land Acts [and] even the creation of peasant proprietorship, the exodus overseas not only continued but flowed most heavily from the very western counties targeted for maximum government assistance.’<sup>309</sup> Land ownership, as nationalists would soon be forced to admit, would change very little for the poorest farmers—those from whose ranks emigrants were most frequently drawn.

In reality, while the more economically affluent strong farmers and graziers benefitted from the ability to purchase greater plots of land, smallholders and cottiers (particularly those farmers who heretofore depended on tillage when Ireland’s arable lands were rapidly moving toward grazing) did not. Despite the hopes of nationalist reformers like Davitt and Parnell, rural Ireland’s economy continued to necessitate large-scale emigration to offset dysfunctional and antiquated farming practices. And while Parnell himself recognized the ‘practical worthlessness of emigration as a permanent remedy’ to the economic situation of the rural small farmer, remittances

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<sup>309</sup> Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, p. 390.

were in many cases the very thing propping it up.<sup>310</sup> The imaginary figure of the peasant farmer who, upon independence, could thrive on nothing more than community, Church, and ownership of his land remained in most cases merely that: a nationalist image. The reality was that, for the majority of small farmers, ownership altered their economic circumstances little, and emigration remained an unfortunate necessity. For nationalist writers, even long after the Land War of the 1880s and the formation of the Irish National Land League in 1879, the literary trope of the rural landscape—and the struggle to remain on it despite both political and economic obstacles—would serve as a powerful weapon in their arsenal to agitate for independence.

### Depopulation

As discussed in Chapter two, readers of Irish literature have long been accustomed to seeing the rural landscape depicted as verdant, generative, and holy. Nationalist rhetoric frequently sought to create these positive—if often whimsical—depictions of the land. Butler, drawing on Revivalist language of myth, describes Cove as having a ‘fairy-like loveliness’;<sup>311</sup> Rosa Mulholland states in her 1910 novel *Father Tim* that no other land ‘has such colouring, such growths of everything lovely, such supernaturally brilliant sunshine, rains so softly dropping, woods of luxuriant foilage [*sic*] so mellowly variegated, songbirds of as tender and exquisite notes’ (*FT* 152). These rapturous eulogies are frequently set, as we have seen in earlier chapters, against images of dangerous urban cityscapes—Nora Degidon’s *United Irishman* article ‘The Lives of the

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<sup>310</sup> Charles Stewart Parnell, ‘The Irish Land Question’, *the North American Review*, 130 (1880), 388–406 (p. 390).

<sup>311</sup> Mary E.L. Butler, ‘Musings at Cove, Cork, and Baile-Atha-Cliath’.

Emigrants' features an Irish priest who tells the narrator of London's 'wretched tenements' where 'there is defilement lurking in the very bricks and mortar'—demonstrating, by comparison, the values that the Irish landscape was intended to enshrine.<sup>312</sup>

The authors in this study engage with these images of land in a variety of ways. Collectively their work demonstrates the trajectory of writing that begins with late-nineteenth century melodramatic depictions of depopulated landscapes like those of Butler, which almost entirely omit the circumstances underpinning the economic and political 'push' factors that resulted in these scenes of barrenness. As we have seen particularly in the works of Tynan and Mulholland, the authors under discussion also create depictions of upper middle-class stewards whose duty is to ameliorate the circumstances faced by tenant farmers contemplating emigration. Mulholland's more socially aware fiction recognizes that the land is often neither pleasant nor productive and can in fact be the inverse of Irish agricultural promise. Both Tynan and Mulholland acknowledge that while social stewardship was one primary way in which the upper middle-class sought to stanch the flow of peasant emigrants, it did not always make rural Ireland viable or habitable. Though positive depictions of the land are frequently central to the anti-emigration debate (Butler, in one instance, optimistically insists that despite 'the lonely stretches of some desolate country district' she is 'buoyed up by the spirit of faith in our country's future'),<sup>313</sup> the authors in this study increasingly offer

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<sup>312</sup> Degidon, p. 6.

<sup>313</sup> Mary E.L. Butler, 'Womanhood and Nationhood V', *the United Irishman*, 31 January 1903, p. 6.

potential solutions to the land issue while simultaneously acknowledging the inhospitable atmosphere facing the peasantry via problems ranging from antiquated farming practices to the after-effects of grasping landlordism.

Depending on the manner in which these depictions of rural emptiness were presented, what was at turns bucolic simplicity may, when shown in other perspectives, have carried the political weight of emigration and eviction rhetoric. The accompanying spectre of Famine imagery within the empty landscape, for example, would have loomed large for readers of the time, rendering such images particularly effective as propaganda. For instance, The *Irish Monthly's* 'Q' notes that in rural Ireland '[h]uman habitations are rarer than the bare walls of roofless cottages, where once a population dwelt, and, as a consequence, see how lonely and untrodden are these roads'.<sup>314</sup> Here, rather than idealized illustrations, the landscape symbolizes a lack of potential or productivity.

Mary Butler's previously discussed 1901 short story 'A Letter from the States' constructs abstract characterizations of the peasants as an extension of the natural, barren landscape. Here, Butler's narrator, who has, ironically, come to Ireland's western shores in order to 'seek rest and refreshment' walks along the 'wide, bare bogland [...] in the direction of the little straggling group of white-washed cabins, which stood huddled together as if for mutual protection from the driving wind and rain which came ever and anon in sudden gusts'.<sup>315</sup> The bleak tone with which she describes the scene—one

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<sup>314</sup> Q, 'Some Results of the Irish Exodus', *the Irish Monthly*, September 1873, 117–20 (p. 117).

<sup>315</sup> Mary E.L. Butler, *A Bundle of Rushes*, p. 123.

entirely devoid of human inhabitants—reveals that Butler recognises the relationship between the unforgiving Irish landscape and peasant depopulation. She notes, for example, that ‘the seagulls circling overhead [were] the only living things in sight’.<sup>316</sup> Her discussion, however, obviates specific discussion of emigration’s socioeconomic aspect, and instead the fault for mass emigration is laid at the feet of ‘a foe more powerful and pitiless than the storm which was striving to “root them out” from the spot to which they clung with such desperation.’<sup>317</sup> The peasantry (at odds with her claim elsewhere that contemporary emigrants are eagerly leaving ‘without shedding a single tear’)<sup>318</sup> are ostensibly being driven out of Ireland by a non-specific, but implicitly political, ‘foe’ of British colonialism.

Similarly, Katharine Tynan’s 1894 short story ‘Mad Molly’ registers impressions of a barren rural landscape, voiced by an upper middle-class narrator. We learn that the eponymous Molly Donovan lives in a cabin that is ‘close by a lonely land that in all its length of miles has not half a dozen human habitations; for a good Irish mile each side there is nothing but the loneliness of winter fields’.<sup>319</sup> The fallow illustrated by ‘winter fields’ serves to accentuate this suggestion of desolation and fruitlessness. The remoteness of Molly’s bye-lane makes it ‘the eeriest place I know’, emphasising the role that the harsh landscape has played on the madness that Molly experiences at losing her two daughters to emigration and shipwreck (C 206). By linking Molly’s physical

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<sup>316</sup> Ibid.

<sup>317</sup> Mary E.L. Butler, *A Bundle of Rushes*, pp. 123–124.

<sup>318</sup> Mary E.L. Butler, ‘Musings at Cove, Cork, and Baile-Atha-Cliath’.

<sup>319</sup> Katharine Tynan, *A Cluster of Nuts: Being Sketches among My Own People* (London: Lawrence and Bullen, 1894), p. 206. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text as C.

surroundings with her mental state and the loss of her only family members, Tynan effectively ties the barren landscape to emigration, loss, and madness. Here, though both authors couch their discourse within the imagery of geographical desolation, their tales function quite differently: while Tynan suggests that the barren landscape is the catalyst for peasant emigration, Butler's empty fields are its result. This subtle difference in their treatment suggests Butler's emphasis on duty and Tynan's acknowledgement of the material difficulty of rural life. Furthermore, while the image of barrenness serves as a context for Butler's discussion of Irish independence, Tynan situates her tale in the years following the Famine, thereby removing it from late-nineteenth century context and sidestepping the political aspects of the contemporary land debate. Instead, her more literary investment in the depiction of scenes of depopulation seeks, once again, to capture the individual cost of emigration rather than delve into its political aspects.

In 'The Wayfarers', another story from the same collection, Tynan reveals a contradiction found frequently in anti-emigration fiction with regard to the land and its occupants. Here as above, the peasant's duty, despite the inhospitable nature of the rural landscape, is to attempt to remain in order to realise its potential. The tale, told again from the point of view of an upper middle-class tourist who encounters a series of peasant emigrants on a train voyage to Cork, features one particularly poignant description of a father and son who are leaving home after 'incessantly striving to wring a sustenance from stony rock and exhausted soil, incessantly face to face with the wet climate that, though it gives such beauty of cloud and mist, soddens the potatoes and



rots the corn and turns the meadow to bitter rank grass' (C 16-17). The affecting language she employs to describe the small farmer's futile struggle to eke out a living in a hostile landscape is touching; however, Tynan never pursues it through to a political conclusion. Instead, somewhat incongruously, she engages in a laudatory description of the empty countryside through which they pass:

Below the tall peaks ran [...] the fairest of glens, with woolly catkins on the willow boughs, and drifts of primroses among the uncurling ferns, and the mountains all around grey as glass, or red and brown like a pheasant's breast, or streaked along the surface with the blue and green of the peacock, or again, towards evening flushed with roseate light, pulsing from one knew not where. (C 14)

Emphasising the nostalgia it will inevitably provoke in the departing emigrant pair, Tynan wonders how 'they will long for this cool green, full of dew and scent, and this wind that comes across the mountains, bracing as an air for giants!' (C 14). Tynan's encomium to the landscape emptied of people is marked by a melancholic tone that is yet redolent with the rhetoric of an idyllic Ireland. This scene underscores a discourse that, while subtly critical of emigration (she notes in what seems like a contradiction that 'the dear country [is] so rich and ready to repay all care'), comprehends its necessity (C 14). This example of the empty landscape aligns fairly closely with Butler's tale above; however, unlike Butler's categorical condemnation of peasant emigration, Tynan suggests, perhaps more sympathetically, that the land is potentially rich enough

to support the peasantry—despite her own descriptions which seem to point to the contrary.

Rosa Mulholland's treatment of the theme of depopulation stands in contrast to Butler, who tends to feature it as merely one facet of a larger abstract political rhetoric, and Tynan, whose depiction of the problems facing the rural peasantry serves more a literary function rather than a political one. Although her treatment of the subject more closely resembles that of Tynan, Mulholland instead seeks to tie together the themes of rural depopulation and emigration so as to underpin corresponding political issues, once again confirming her investment in writing about large-scale social problems. What follows is one of Mulholland's earlier journalistic pieces in the *Irish Monthly*, signalling the way in which emigration and depopulation would become both a literary inspiration and political pursuit. I include the following excerpt, though long, because it glimpses Mulholland's initial musings regarding rural depopulation resulting from emigration. Though Mulholland draws on many of the same Revivalist images as Tynan and Butler, hers is a very different discourse in that she appears to be searching—as she continues to do in her longer fictional work—for a middle ground between the problems faced by remaining farmers and those faced by emigrants. Here she begins by posing a rhetorical question which weighs what will be recurring issues: specifically that of one's duty to remain on the land over what might be perceived as the more tempting proposition of emigration. She asks

Is it well for all who can go to depart from here and leave the glens empty of human life, and the field pastures for cattle alone, to escape from an impoverished country with their little capital of youth and energy and keen wits, and give to a foreign community, which does not want them, the entire worth of their life's labour, their virtues, their faith, and their posterity? It is evident that, having made a little money, they seldom come home to add to the stores of the old hive from which they were early expelled the wax gathered in distant regions. By the time it is possible, their roots are struck too deep in alien soil. They tell their children of the lovely Erin, the glorious island of saints, the gem of the sea, in which they had the happiness to be born, and they muse over her perfections on winter nights, seeing fairy-like hills and dales, enchanted rivulets and pasture lands which knew them once, in the depth of the red coal embers which are as prose unto poetry compared with the fragrant turf fire that leaps and glows, a sacred flame, in the shrine of their sanctifying memory.<sup>320</sup>

Mulholland's wistful treatise begins with a classic image of rural depopulation, her suggestion that it is the emigrant who is 'leav[ing] the glens empty of human life', evoking a subtle condemnation (rather than Tynan who claims that the desolate landscape prompts their emigration). Mulholland does, however, concede that the difficulty of life in rural Ireland is why many seek to 'escape'. The essay then builds on 'Holy Ireland' imagery similar to Catholic sentimentalised anti-emigration propaganda, suggesting the emigrant's eagerness to exchange her 'virtue' and 'faith' for 'a little

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<sup>320</sup> Rosa Mulholland, 'The Irish Exile's Home-Sickness', *the Irish Monthly*, November 1892, 561–64 (p. 563).

money' once away from Ireland's shores. While Mulholland's tone is not entirely condemnatory—clearly she sympathises at least to a certain extent with the reasons behind rural emigration—she also romanticizes the land in a manner evoking Revivalist folk tale (the 'fairy-like hills and dales'), contradicting earlier statements attesting to the quotidian difficulties facing the peasantry. Her choice of tone and lexis tends, on the whole, to evoke the nostalgia discussed previously in the context of the return, building an idealizing discourse despite an acknowledgement of the reasons for which the peasants choose to leave.

In her 1910 novel *Father Tim*, Mulholland pursues these same issues, here voicing her opinions through the novel's eponymous protagonist, himself a campaigner on social issues and advocate for the poor. It is not surprising, then, that Mulholland should recycle discourse from the above article in the following fictionalized account of peasant emigration. Here, on his way home to visit his family, Father Tim Melody is 'met by a crowd of emigrants travelling to Queenstown for America' (*FT* 151). In seeing the young people leaving, he asks himself whether

it is better to half starve on an Irish hillside, to ford the stream with bare feet, to pray in a poor chapel, with, maybe, holes in the roof and swallows diving across the sanctuary, to love God and fear the land-agent, or to earn good wages in the big city, perhaps forgetting religion and learning to think that Ireland is a birthplace to be ashamed of, where the hills are not particularly holy, and the

fields are hardly ever green? Is it well to leave the glens empty of human life, and the fields pasture for cattle alone. (*FT* 151)

While the tone leans slightly more toward the sensational than in the aforementioned journalistic contribution, the basic tenet remains the same: Mulholland's uncertainty about peasant emigration as a root cause of rural depopulation. Mulholland clearly condemns the attitude that is defeated by these difficulties; the very fact that these images are familiar, however, belies this and shows that they have some currency with her readers (and therefore they may have some sympathy with a peasant who wishes to escape this bleak prospect). Her evocation, which underscores Catholic anti-materialist discourse privileging the love of God over 'good wages in the big city'—as if they were mutually exclusive—reinforces the idea that while rural life is difficult, it is worth preserving. Here the bucolic language of Ireland's hills and streams is contrasted with the realities of 'half starv[ation]', demonstrating Mulholland's recognition of the difficulties facing the rural peasant. Mulholland's language is heavily freighted with Catholic doctrine (which is not surprising for a novel whose protagonist is a parish priest), emphasizing the moral risk to emigrants who 'forget religion' upon leaving. Here rural depopulation is treated with a more condemnatory tone than the previous excerpt, evoking yet more Catholic cautionary language. As a philanthropist and an author of social problem novels, Mulholland was certainly familiar with the difficulties facing Ireland's poor. The ambivalence within the aforementioned passages suggest that she seems to have difficulty squaring this awareness with the hard line of Catholic anti-emigration propaganda that she wants to take. So, while her depictions of Ireland wax

lyrical, a close reading exposes the tensions she inevitably feels with regard to the dearth of choices available to peasant emigrants.

Though all of the four excerpts discussed here were written in the years surrounding some of the major events of the land acts, neither Butler nor Tynan responds to the contemporary political situation or to the ways in which land reform might have affected emigrants' decisions to leave. While Butler merely suggests a 'powerful and pitiless' foe without economic or political specificity, Tynan's 'Molly' is tied to 'the famine of '48', most likely to intentionally distance her from contemporary discussions of land and emigration, allowing her readers the catharsis of a good tale divorced from modern-day politics. Mulholland's excerpt alone reveals her engagement with current politics and the evolution of her discourse. The *IM* selection cited above (published in 1894) continues Mulholland's discussion of emigration in the following passage:

It is a question which the evicting landlord does not trouble himself to answer. If the rent he requires is not forthcoming, the cabin wall must be broken in and the thatch set alight, and the outcasts, if they do not die in the poorhouse at home, may drift across the sea in the emigrant ship to answer such questions as the above for themselves.<sup>321</sup>

Here we see Mulholland employing direct language that unequivocally marks landlordism and eviction as the root causes of emigration ahead of the threat of a

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<sup>321</sup> Mulholland, 'The Irish Exile's Home-Sickness', p. 562.

barren landscape. Interestingly, the above-cited excerpt from *Father Tim* chastising the peasants for deserting Ireland is followed not by a discussion of eviction but instead by Tim's observations when on a visit to his family home. Mulholland tells us that upon his arrival he is 'struck by the improvements about the little farmhouse [where] the print of penal degradation [was] more boldly effaced' (FT 153). By 1910, *Father Tim* allows for more optimism at least in terms of peasant proprietorship, if not in terms of emigration, and implicitly acts as a sort of reproach and indeed riposte to those emigrants in whose mouths he has just put what he sees as treacherous and (presumably) false reasons for leaving.

Depictions of the depopulated Irish countryside, while rich in symbolism and pathos, are employed very differently by the authors under discussion here: as a theme, depopulation could be couched either as a root cause or as the result of emigration, as fodder for mere literary catharsis or for intense and focused political rhetoric. Furthermore, depending on the author's audience and intention, the culprit of the empty Irish countryside could range from British colonialism to absentee landlords to the peasants themselves. Eviction, however, is a much less malleable trope, and one in which a certain measure of political engagement is required. We might expect Mary Butler to have engaged with this topic given her investment in nationalist politics, but—perhaps because her family were long-standing landowning aristocracy—she does not. Katharine Tynan more predictably avoids it, conscious perhaps of her English middle-class readership. Rosa Mulholland, however, despite her upper middle-class status, addresses it head on.

## Eviction

Often couched as a David and Goliath power struggle between tenants and landlords, the depiction of eviction is one of the most evocative themes in anti-emigration writing of the period. It is also one of the most politically-charged, perhaps explaining why Mulholland addressed it so frequently (and Tynan so rarely). Another key plank in the argument against emigration, the link between eviction and emigration lies in the economic hardship of small farmers faced with rising rents and the corresponding necessity of remittances sent to the family by non-inheriting children who have emigrated. While it is impossible to completely decouple the issues relating to eviction from the idea of landlordism, I would like to look in this section at three particularly effective depictions of eviction and how they are employed as a rhetorical strategy in both upper middle-class and peasant fiction aimed at upper middle-class readers. While positive depictions demonstrate landlords' responsibility towards their tenants to prevent their emigration, negative depictions, on the contrary, chastise those landlords who oblige their tenantry to emigrate as a direct result of unreasonable rents. Here, I examine Rosa Mulholland's treatment of the theme of eviction in three of her novels: *Norah of Waterford*, *Marcella Grace*, and *Giannetta*. While the character of these stories varies—*Norah* is a peasant romance, *Marcella Grace* and *Giannetta* are upper middle-class romances with a political edge—her narratives in each case engage with the political situation underpinning eviction and emigration and seek to create realistic portraits. As is consistent with the vast majority of Mulholland's work, she attempts here again to persuade as well as entertain her upper middle-class readers, carefully



avoiding blaming her readership while shedding light on what was a much-debated topic at the time of writing, all three of the novels being written just after the land wars at the end of the nineteenth century.

Mulholland's discourse on depopulation accentuates its link with eviction in the following scene from 1915's *Norah of Waterford*, a novel set against the backdrop of the eviction and land reform of the land wars of the 1880s whose central premise lies in the eviction, or imminent eviction, of the families of both of the central protagonists, the Fitzgeralds and the Ahernes. Despite Gladstone's initial 1880 Land Act, a series of poor harvests resulted in ever-rising numbers of evictions, or threatened evictions, providing fodder for Mulholland's discourse on the unfortunate necessity of peasant emigration to prop up a limping economy.<sup>322</sup> Here, an eviction is directly preceded by an extended description of the bleak, emptied landscape:

Here and there stood the little farmsteads. Over at one side they had still a look of life, nestling among their cocks of hay and straw, but down yonder they were only the corpses of homes, chimneys without smoke, windows mere staring sockets, no cosy thatched hillocks of yellow fodder guarding them round, occasionally a broken gable or roof—everything suggestive of ruin and desolation. Suited to the condition of the habitations was the aspect of the fields lying about them, with weeds waving high between green bank and bank; no cattle, no labourers, no ploughing—a desert, depopulated and forsaken. (NW 2)

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<sup>322</sup> Miller notes that 'between 1878 and 1886 some 123,000 persons, over 26,000 families, suffered eviction.' This figure is far greater than the fewer than 2,000 evictions in 1863 and 1864. Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, p. 388.

Like Butler, Mulholland uses a personification of the landscape to suggest the ills done to the people themselves (windows here are ‘mere staring sockets’), though in this instance they are absent specifically as the result of eviction. Unlike Tynan’s ‘Wayfarers’, however, which suggests that the rural landscape is emptied as a result of peasant farmers’ sense of futility in working inhospitable soil, here Mulholland unequivocally establishes a causal link between a rural wasteland and eviction. In contrast to other instances where Mulholland sings the praises of the Irish landscape, here she discusses the

pathetic features of the Irish landscape, the brown and green fields soaked in grey mist, the long streaks of moor and swamp, the clusterings of low trees, which had now shed almost all their leaves, and showed only a red or yellow patch of foliage to make their melancholy nakedness more noticeable. (*NW* 2)

The pathos with which the landscape is presented tacitly acknowledges reasons why peasant emigration might be necessary.

Here Mulholland obviously seeks to set the novel’s tone with such charged language connoting death (‘corpses of homes’) and emigration (leaving the land ‘forsaken’). Furthermore, the previously discussed character of Sabina Doolan—who has spent her youth and, presumably her childbearing years, abroad rather than in Ireland—is considered an unacceptable candidate for marriage because she is no longer fecund. This key aspect of the novel’s plot—a lack of fruitfulness as a result of eviction and subsequent emigration—while not explicitly discussed, also contributes to the story’s

emphasis on the theme of peasant responsibility to remain on the land if at all possible. Although Rosa Mulholland resists casting blame categorically on emigrating peasants, mention in the text of the Land League—which she refers to as The Organisation—as providing housing and basic sustenance for evictees suggest her belief that options aside from emigration do exist for those stalwarts who recognise their duty to endure.

*Norah of Waterford's* romance narrative begins with an eviction scene based, according to Brown, on the estate of Charles Ponsonby in Youghal.<sup>323</sup> Told in third person narration, the scene captures the perspective of the Fitzgerald family who awake and await their removal. Norah tells a younger sibling, with greatly exaggerated optimism, that they have the good fortune to 'live in a beautiful wooden house'—a Land League hut—unlike 'the poor Morans that had to take the road last year and march away with themselves nowhere' (NW 2). Though Mulholland never discloses the details behind the family's eviction, the Ponsonby Estate evictions represented an important moment in the Plan of Campaign.<sup>324</sup> Estates like Ponsonby's which were threatened by the Plan opted instead to evict the tenants, who then took up residence in a Plan-erected 'town' just outside of the estate's borders. The Land League, as Norah's father reflects reverently, 'engaged to feed and shelter [displaced tenants] till the good time supposed to be coming might enable them to return to the little farm on which he had struggled to pay and live' (NW 2-3). Mulholland's use of these current affairs (evictions

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<sup>323</sup> Stephen Brown J., *Ireland in Fiction: A Guide to Irish Novels, Tales, Romances, and Folk-Lore* (Dublin and London: Maunsel and Company, 1916), p. 223.

<sup>324</sup> An organised strategy by farmers and nationalist politicians to retaliate against absentee landlords and unreasonable 'rack' rents. Laurence M. Geary, *The Plan of Campaign, 1886-1891* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1986).

like the one on the Ponsonby estate were widely reported in both English and Irish newspapers) and her evident sympathy for the peasantry who are depicted as both passive and trapped within a dysfunctional system underscores her investment in employing political events to capture her readers' interest and in building a story capable of persuading an audience with regard to her own standpoint vis-à-vis emigration.

A 'hundred men'—military, officers, and constabulary—come that morning to evict the Fitzgerald family. Depicted in only the most cursory manner, the men show themselves to be indifferent to the family's plight: Mulholland tells us that they 'drew their cloaks around their knees, and lit their cigars, and smoked and chatted together' while the Fitzgerald's belongings are 'flung onto the wet grass,' and 'water was thrown on the hearthstone and the fire was quenched' (NW 3). Presumably the lack of background information regarding the circumstances leading up to the eviction—which is reduced to a single scene to generate a sense pathos while establishing a pretext for both the romance narrative and a more detailed discussion of emigration—aims to move her upper middle-class reader without alienating them. There is, importantly, no pointed mention of the landlord here, the focus being on the peasantry and on the act of eviction. Furthermore, the fact that the Land League are referred to merely as 'the Organisation' suggests that, while drawing attention to the social plight of eviction, Mulholland (unlike *Marcella Grace*, for instance) does not wish to delve too deeply into the conflict's origins.

Mulholland does however draw attention to the plight of the rural small farmer and concedes that emigration is frequently an economic necessity for the displaced tenant. Now that the family are homeless, Mrs Fitzgerald tells her friend Mrs Aherne that 'There's no paid work to be paid for the likes of [Norah], and now that the farm's gone she thinks we can do without her hands at home' (NW 4). In an attempt to avoid Norah's emigration, Mrs Aherne suggests that Norah could 'come and be servant-girl' to her family, thereby at least saving the Fitzgeralds the burden of feeding one more family member (NW 5). Mrs Fitzgerald immediately agrees, telling Mrs Aherne than 'the Lord sent you to keep her from crossin' the sea from me' (NW 5). Although Norah will regularly weigh the pros and cons of emigration and remittances, her sense of duty will keep her home. While merely a context for the novel's romance, this exchange does highlight Mulholland's understanding of the historical reality of the often superfluous dowry-less daughters who were often sent abroad (or chose to go) so as to not be a burden on their families' resources and also their responsibility to send remittances to ease the families' financial difficulties. However, Mulholland amends this common situation and turns it into a romance, demonstrating Norah's reward for remaining on the land.

Another of Mulholland's more politically-focused romances is her 1885 upper middle-class novel *Marcella Grace*, written in response to the 1881 Land Act which gave increasing leverage to the tenant farmer against abusive rents. Set against the 1879-1882 land war, the narrative is a pointed political discussion regarding landlordism and eviction. The story is recounted from the vantage point of Marcella who learns that she

is a distant cousin of Mrs Timothy O'Flaherty O'Kelly and, upon her death, inherits the old woman's country estate, Distresna. As Mrs O'Kelly had for some years been an absentee landlord, Marcella decides to visit her tenants to understand the situation from their point of view. While the deceased Mrs O'Kelly's agent had regularly raised rents, at the same time

the seasons had been wet and cruel, turf had not been dried, and potatoes had failed, and a good part of the hard-earned rent, earned in America, England, anywhere, had been spent on the insufficient yellow-meal on which the defaulters all but starved. (*MG* 238)

Marcella learns from the peasants that there had been 'several evictions within the year before Mrs O'Kelly's death' and that, in some cases

the ruined families had disappeared from the country, in others they lived among their neighbours, while a son or daughter had one as a sort of advanced guard to America to try to earn some money which might get them reinstated in their holdings. (*MG* 238)

Here Mulholland points up the relationships between emigration, seasonal migration, and chain migration as means of avoiding eviction under landlords and agents who—in this case at least—are either ignorant of or indifferent to the conditions under which the tenants struggle to survive. The specificity with which Mulholland describes those conditions suggests a certain familiarity with and interest in the issue and a desire to make that issue both didactic in terms of the economic and social realities being

addressed as well as entertaining (the eviction serves as catalyst for a romance, after all) for her upper middle-class reader.

Lastly, perhaps Mulholland's most compelling depiction of eviction takes place in her 1889 upper middle-class novel *Giannetta*. Based on the Glenbeigh evictions in County Kerry in 1887,<sup>325</sup> the scene is described from the point of view of the protagonist herself who witnesses what was, in Mulholland's time, a story which attracted much attention from both the press and land campaigners. *The Times* featured the story and even admitted that one of the families evicted were 'half-naked and emaciated by hunger', though the article's author did, not surprisingly, side with the landlord in the dispute.<sup>326</sup> When Giannetta learns of the evictions to be enacted upon fifty tenant families of the neighbouring estate of the evil Sir Rupert Kirwan, she, along with Sir Rupert's nephew, Pierce, who is also sympathetic to the tenants, seek out the eventual victims in order to discuss ways to save the families' homes. When Giannetta and Pierce are first approached by a young villager named Pastheen Hanlon, Pierce asks her what her family plans to do to fight the eviction. She tells him that

I do' know, sir. We ate up all the money Mary sent from America. [...] The money that was to have paid the rent. Sure we couldn't help it, Mr. Pierce. We ate so little always that we can't well ate no less. (G 119)

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<sup>325</sup> The Glenbeigh evictions took place on the estate of Rowland Winn in January of 1887 after failed negotiations between landlord and tenants regarding unpaid rents. Stephen Brown J., *Ireland in Fiction*, p. 223.

<sup>326</sup> The author also insisted that the eviction was the responsibility of the agent rather than the landlord, as the estate had 'fallen into the hands of mortgagees, at whose instance the evictions were carried out.' 'Ireland', *The Times*, 13 January 1887, p. 6.

Other families tell more or less a similar story: in most cases, ‘the able-bodied members of the family were away across the sea earning the wage that could not be extracted from the rock-strewn land’—an emotionally evocative portrait similar to Tynan’s ‘Wayfarers’ struggle to survive on an inhospitable landscape, though in this instance depicted in connection to the families’ inability to pay rack rents (*G* 126).

One tenant, a man named Dan Reilly, vows that he will not quit his farm after the battle fought over several generations by his family to keep it (his parents had been evicted from the same farm when Dan was a child, obliging the family to emigrate to America where Dan was raised). He declares that

[e]very one of my family, but myself, died of hardship and want of work [while] I pushed up somehow [and] when I was a man my one thought was to come back to Ireland and buy for my own the bit of land and home that my father was turned out of. (*G* 154)

After having purchased the lease of the family farm and greatly increasing its value, Reilly is now being forced out by ever-increasing rents. Mulholland’s employment of Dan as a voice of returnee nostalgia serves to reinforce his role as a sympathetic peasant character suffering the injustices of the land tenantry system. Mulholland recounts this series of individual vignettes as a way of effectively linking eviction and emigration with economic hardship despite the diligent efforts of the tenantry. The eviction scene itself—an entire chapter of the novel—pits a hardworking and earnest tenantry against a callous and insensitive system that favours the landowner.



The chapter entitled 'The Doomed Glen' captures in detail the measures taken by both the tenants and the authorities, as witnessed by Giannetta and her family. Again, Mulholland tells of the approaching 'hundred mounted policemen, riding three or four abreast' plus 'two cars, the first carrying the agent and the sheriff, the second about half a dozen bailiffs' followed by a cart full of 'crowbars and other instruments requisite for the day's campaign' (G 215). As the team begins with the Hanlon home, Mulholland recounts in highly emotional language the turning out of the family in a late December storm:

At a word from the agent the police advanced, seized [Tim Hanlon] by the arms and thrust him from the doorway, while the bailiffs made their way into the cabin. Pastheen's eldest brother, a lad of fifteen, standing behind, laid hold of a piece of wood, struck the first man that entered a blow on the head, and was instantly, with his father, handcuffed by the constabulary. The fever patient [Hanlon's ailing wife] raised herself on her elbow and gazed with glazed eyes at the intruders; while the aged grandmother, kneeling at the foot of the bed, threw up her wrinkled arms and fell forward, burying her face at her daughter's feet. The younger children flung themselves from all sides upon their mother, and clung to her with the energy of terror. (G 217)

The pathos employed here and elsewhere in the novel reveals *Giannetta* as Mulholland's most unequivocal statement against rack-renting practices of absentee landlords, as well as a call to upper middle-class readers to witness the difficulties faced

by rural tenants. While the rest of *Giannetta's* plot moves away from these scenes and toward a more standard upper middle-class romance, this rhetoric regarding the sufferings of peasant families provides a potent statement of Mulholland's argument regarding the responsibilities of landowners to improve the conditions of rural small farmers to prevent large scale emigration that would otherwise prove unavoidable. Mulholland's use of images of violence work against the previously discussed encomia to idyllic Ireland: here the concept of home is rendered precarious and physically unsafe. Tellingly, however, the villains participating are agents and police rather than the landlord himself, perhaps as a way to draw her readership's attention to a sensitive issue without directly pointing an accusatory finger at her readership. Mulholland's aptitude toward and interest in the social problem novel does much to explain her interest in the depiction of scenes like this one that were essentially ripped from newspaper headlines. Unlike Butler, whose political writings focus vaguely on the effects of British imperialism and thus maintain an abstract and romanticised perspective with regard to its victims; and unlike Tynan's reluctance to address political matters with the same candour, or at least her desire to privilege the literary over the didactic, the specificity of Mulholland's depictions indicates her level of engagement with contemporary social and political problems, of which relations between landlords and their tenantry was merely one.

### **Landlords and Landlordism**

The motif of the Irish landlord figures prominently in Irish fiction well into the twentieth century. While the landlord character in fiction that takes peasants as its main subjects

remains almost exclusively associated with qualities of greed and social injustice, (Guinan's *Soggarth Aroon* and Kickham's *Knocknagow* and *Sally Cavanagh*, for instance), historically speaking, landlords ranged from the absentee and rack-renting variety (the evils of landlordism given extensive historical, cultural and fictional representation) to the attentive and philanthropically-minded. Satirist Jonathan Swift repined what he viewed as the landlords' parasitical presence in Ireland well before the period under discussion: 'But all turn Leasers to that Mongril breed/who from thee sprung, yet on they Vitals feed'.<sup>327</sup> It is worth noting here that Swift's critique pertains specifically to Anglo-Irish absentee landlords—the 'mongrel' being half-English and half-Irish. Foster notes, however, that after the Famine the landlord class became increasingly Catholic,<sup>328</sup> complicating the figure of the landlord and the political dimension of landlordism (a word coined, according to the *OED*, in 1844—an era which would mark the strained relationship between small tenant farmers and their absentee landlords) as a phenomenon and a cultural concept.

Kirkpatrick observes that Maria Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent* (1800), generally considered the first Big House novel and one which details the effects of absentee landlordism on the Irish tenantry, evokes 'both the castle as embodiment of hereditary right to land as well as a system of rack-renting which abused that power'.<sup>329</sup> Correspondingly, the trope of the evil absentee landlord and the image of the evicted

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<sup>327</sup> From *Poetical Works*, cited in Kevin Kenny, *Ireland and the British Empire* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 168.

<sup>328</sup> R. F. Foster, p. 172.

<sup>329</sup> Maria Edgeworth, *Castle Rackrent*, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. x.

tenant frequently functioned as a central aspect of discussions around peasant emigration and land within nationalist discourse. According to Kane, late nineteenth-century land reformers acted on the premise that ‘the abolition of landlordism and the establishment of peasant proprietary [would lead] to a secure, happy and prosperous Ireland.’<sup>330</sup> Upper middle-class authors of the late nineteenth century—in some cases landowners themselves—nonetheless frequently tied the themes of absentee landlordism to emigration and thus physically present landlords with the well-being of their tenantry, and even, in the case of Mulholland, acknowledging the possibility of eventual peasant proprietorship. Mulholland’s novels, for example, often mention the dependence on peasant emigration for remittances to pay rising rents: *Marcella Grace* features peasants going abroad to ‘airn the rint’; *Giannetta*’s Jim Hanlon has been ‘away in England earnin’ for Sir Rupert’, effectively evincing peasant emigration as a key consequence of a poor landlord-tenant relationship (*MG* 230; *G* 203). For writers like Mulholland and, to a lesser degree, Tynan and Butler, the link between landlords and emigration served as a means to point up the evils of absentee landlordism, rather than an ostensibly more participatory stewardship by upper middle-class residing on their estates, making absenteeism the object of focus for what was in reality a much more complex problem.

The fact that nationalist upper middle-class authors like Mulholland created negative depictions of landlords and landlordism in her peasant fiction suggests the

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<sup>330</sup> Anne Kane, ‘Narratives of Nationalism: Constructing Irish National Identity during the Land War, 1879–82’, *National Identities*, 2 (2000), 245–64 (p. 253).

degree to which she was willing to conform to this tradition so that her work might assume a didactic stance for her upper middle-class readership. Mulholland's peasant novels *The Return of Mary O'Murrough* and *Norah of Waterford* both feature the actions of landlords as a key issue, but, unlike more abstract political narratives like Butler's *Ring* that maintains the tenant's worst enemy is British colonialism in a more general sense, Mulholland expresses her landlord-tenant conflict more explicitly. She tends, however, to focus the narrative on the problem to be solved rather than on the source of the conflict between tenants and landowners. For example, though land ownership is central to the plot of *The Return of Mary O'Murrough*, the landlord, while an important figure, is only mentioned in passing: Shan, in awaiting Mary's return from America, travels to the nearby town of Ballyorglin only to learn that 'the purchase of the farm was as uncertain as ever. The landlord was holding out for more money than the people could give' (RMO 96). Later, Shan and Tom Donohoe discuss the relationship between emigration and landlordism, particularly in the context of the transition from tillage and pasturage and what they believe is the inevitability of land transfer from landlord to tenant:

"The lan'lords might as well sell," said Tom, watching the smoke of his pipe circling in the frosty air. "I don' know what they mane to do with the land when the people's all gone. What do themselves want with lan' they can't work? It won't make fortunes for them. The cattle an' grain from American and New Zealand is too many for them, It's you an' you else that knows how to make the most of it, an' to live on the least of it." (RMO 103-104)

This passage demonstrates Mulholland's understanding of the 'land', that is, the economics behind the transition from tillage to pasturage and its effect on the small farmer who, faced with absentee landlords' decision to 'clear' the land to make room for grazing, has little choice but to emigrate. All writers under discussion here compose encomia to an idealised 'soil' while simultaneously attesting to a greater or lesser degree to the difficulties that the land poses for the peasant farmer. However, only Mulholland (and, later, Cummins) seeks to acknowledge and represent the social realities therein, rather than simply reducing discussions of land to a subject of an abstract political debate like Butler, or depoliticised literary pathos that tends to focus instead on the aesthetic features of the landscape, like Tynan, rather than on the realities of labour and cultivation. Tom proceeds to tell Shan about a man from Connaught told him about an estate where

five hundhert families were put out, an' the lan' give up to cattle, an' not a roof or a wall to be seen for miles but a herd's house her an' there, an' 'steadings' for the beasts. The Englishman that done it lost his money, an' went away cursin' his luck. He said the Irishman knew how to manage the figaries of his own soil an' his own weather betther nor ever a foreigner could do with his "improvements."

(*RMO* 104)

Mulholland does foreground irresponsible landlord behaviour here, but in this instance the blame is laid on the English more generally, who still owned much of the land in Ireland, despite recent reforms. Implied here is that an Irish landlord would have been

more knowledgeable as regards the correct way to run an estate and would have been both more benevolent toward the peasantry and more financially successful, though Foster suggests that history contradicts this assertion to some extent.<sup>331</sup> Shan and Tom's conversation continues directly onto the subject of Home Rule (which Shan insists will 'keep the people at home') showing very clearly Mulholland's position against continued English dominance—as the above depiction of the landlord suggests (*RMO* 105). The idea of the Irish upper middle-class landlord presents a compromise that stops short of Home Rule: a response to the issues she raises that many of her upper middle-class readers might more easily tolerate.

Specific discussions of landlordism are indeed for the most part sidestepped throughout *Norah of Waterford*, despite the fact that the romance narrative hinges on the problems of a small farmer threatened with eviction. Aside from the occasional mention of a landlord, here the looming malevolent presence is not even a British absentee landlord, but instead Rogan, an Irish gombeen man. In creating such a character, Mulholland avoids assigning blame to the upper middle-class reader. Foster also observes this trend in *Norah*, noting that, by employing a fellow Irishman—and a member of the rising Catholic middle-class—the 'position of the gentry is not seen as part of the Irish problem'.<sup>332</sup> A Shylock figure, Rogan is described as having 'hawk-like features,' eyes of a 'Satanic blackness', and an 'eagle nose', and is repeatedly mentioned in conjunction with the landlord, seeking to 'accomplish [the small farmer's] ruin' (*NW*

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<sup>331</sup>Foster notes that the position of some—often the most ruthless—landlords was 'strengthened by the collapse of their less efficient peers in the 1850s', pointing out that many of the new, post-Famine class of landlord were Catholic. R. F. Foster, p. 173.

<sup>332</sup> John Foster, p. 124.

551, 148). Telling Joe Aherne that '[b]eggars can go to America, or the devil if they like', it is Rogan, rather than the figure of the grasping landlord, who forces Joe and Norah to contemplate emigration in order to save the family farm (NW 550). The character of Rogan points up a frequent strategy of Protestant Anglo-Irish writers who avoided implicating their English readership, in this case keeping the conflict between Irish peasants; here Mulholland continues in this tradition, confirming the fact that it is indeed the upper middle-class class to whom she wants principally to appeal.

The upper middle-class fiction of Butler, Tynan, and Mulholland, by contrast, often portrays landlords much more generously, contrasting community-oriented, philanthropically-minded upper class protagonists against other, more neglectful absentee landlords (those who lived in England and relied on rents to underwrite their often extravagant lifestyles) who were depicted as causing further absenteeism on the part of the peasants via emigration. Butler's *Ring of Day* juxtaposes thwarted suitor George Eyre against Beatrice Burke, making him an exemplar of the irresponsible absentee landlord. Described as callous and uninterested in the material difficulties faced by the rural peasantry, he informs Beatrice that

I live on my rents instead of by my wits, and while the latter grow rusty often for want of use, the former have a way of diminishing, owing to the desultory attention I pay to my property. My visits to it resemble angels' visits, inasmuch as they are rare, but in every other respect I believe my tenants are of the



opinion that they bear not the remotest resemblance to heavenly visitations. (*RD* 15)

Ostensibly enjoying a lavish lifestyle through the sacrifices of his tenants, Eyre's glib arrogance marks him as one who falls short of both Beatrice's philanthropic expectations and Butler's political ones.

The theme of 'soil' does not serve the same function when discussing upper middle-class landowners as it does with peasant characters. Rather than being defined by their relationship with the land, the twin themes of stewardship and economically-oriented philanthropy toward the peasantry are recurrent throughout the works under examination here. While upper middle-class fiction regularly features examples of the Irish landowning families' sense of responsibility toward the community, Smith asserts that history confirms the fact that the landlord as steward or philanthrope was the exception rather than the rule. Instead, she notes that 'Irish tenants and English landlords viewed each other with animosity'.<sup>333</sup> Here, however, the authors creating these characters sought to construct a profile of the benevolent landlord who was an emotionally- and financially-invested community leader interested, as Kenny puts it, in 'nurturing propinquity' with his tenantry.<sup>334</sup>

Humanitarian stewardship, as well as economically-based philanthropic interests, appear as a consequence of upper middle-class protagonists' sense of duty to

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<sup>333</sup> Cynthia E. Smith, 'The Land-Tenure System in Ireland: A Fatal Regime', *Marquette Law Review*, 76 (1992), 469–84 (p. 473).

<sup>334</sup> Kenny, p. 168.

thwart the emigration of their tenantry (as addressed in Chapter one with regard to collaboration with the clergy). These themes converge in, for example, Tynan's *The French Wife*. While Alison Barnard 'spends half her time with sewing-classes and lace-classes [...] and village libraries', a pair of elderly brothers—London bankers—visit the area and take an interest in helping the peasantry, deciding to use their collective business knowledge and putting 'all the scattered industries of the country about here on a business footing [suggesting instead that] we will be their employers' (*FW* 75). This economically-focused philanthropy, along with Alison's more personal stewardship (as seen also in her previously mentioned attempts to deter Kitty Donegan from emigrating) suggest that Tynan seeks to stanch the flow of emigrants and to reinforce the upper middle-class-peasant relationship through good works and Anglo-Irish financial savvy. For Tynan and Mulholland, upper middle-class stewardship and philanthropy present a third option for the peasants to garner necessary funds to support themselves apart from emigration or independence. The idea of peasant proprietorship, incidentally, does not appear among their options for either Tynan or Butler.

Mulholland's *Giannetta* further illustrates this concept of upper middle-class stewardship as a key aspect of a mutually beneficial relationship, underscoring Mulholland's belief that a benevolent landlord was the optimal solution to the economic woes of the peasantry. Here she treats the issue of landlordism slightly differently from Butler, though she too creates an archetypal flat, evil landlord character against which to juxtapose the philanthropically-minded landlord character of *Giannetta*. Early in the novel, before being exposed to the dramas of eviction and tenant relations, *Giannetta*

learns that Sir Rupert is 'a bad man' who 'stays away in England and just drags all the money out of the poor here, starving and killing them, and sending them right and left when they don't pay him his cruel rents' (*G* 97). It is against his example that Giannetta seeks to learn about the abuses of the landlord system, seeking to do right by her tenantry and thereby demonstrating the possibility of beneficent landownership to Mulholland's readers. As Giannetta interviews Sir Rupert tenants, Mulholland effectively links emigration to the abuses of the absentee landlord system, alluding to 'Pat in America' and 'Mary in Australia' who, through their remittances, attempt to help their families 'keep up with Sir Rupert' (*G* 122). Another woman tells Giannetta of how she 'starved the children to feed the pigs [...] for Sir Rupert's pocket [...] [a]nd poor Tim he sent all he could earn harvesting in England, and all isn't enough, and the roof is to be took from over us' (*G* 123-124). In stark contrast from Sir Rupert, Giannetta and her Aunt Eve, who has been in America aiding emigrants from Sir Rupert's property and frequently assisting them to send remittances to pay Sir Rupert's rents, resolve to take on a pastoral role toward the tenantry. In terms of her philanthropic intentions, Giannetta can, at least to some extent, be viewed as a parallel to Tynan's Alison Barnard or even Butler's Beatrice Burke; the key differences between these three characters, however, is that Mulholland is the only one of the three to supply readers with a closely-detailed context and an actual adversary (though perhaps a rather cartoonish villain nonetheless).

Giannetta suggests an intricate plan of stewardship and philanthropy following the eviction of Sir Rupert's tenants. Acknowledging the probability of emigration

following the expulsion of so many families, Giannetta's Uncle Pierce deplors his own inability to save them: 'It is like murder after robbery to send them across the sea, unfitted by experience and without material means to make their way further through life'—a statement which, again, underscores the theme of passivity and victimisation of the peasantry as a monolithic mass seen throughout much of the upper middle-class fiction discussed within this study (G 265). Upon learning that her father has honoured her wish to use her inheritance to purchase land and establish tenant plots for several of the evicted families, Giannetta proposes that she 'make a philanthropic experiment':

Father went on to say that he had a piece of land not a mile away, which I could buy of him at a very moderate price. Upon this I might build, say, a dozen cottages to begin with, to each of which should be attached a couple of fields and a garden. The building of the cottages would employ labour; and when they were finished we might select a dozen of the outcast families, the most industrious and thrifty we knew of, and invite them to buy their own holdings. The sum of purchase money, which must be made very low, should be lent by me, to be repaid in instalments according to agreement. (G 293-294)

Giannetta remarks upon viewing the plot that it had 'become as a sort of promised land in our eyes', the *sous-entendu* being that the landlord class in general have the responsibility and the ability, if they so choose, to deliver the peasantry from the bonds of poverty and the necessity of emigration (G 297). This land, Giannetta insists, will be her 'industrial settlement' (G 297). It is interesting that Giannetta's plan anticipates a

few key land acts that, several years after the novel's publication, are in many ways parallel, except that the sponsors for rural social housing programmes would be D.D. Sheehan's Irish Land and Labour Association rather than upper class landlords (chiefly among them James Bryce's Labourers (Ireland) Act of 1906, Birrell's Labourers (Ireland) Act of 1911, and the Labourers (Ireland) Act of 1919).<sup>335</sup>

Giannetta's next step is to introduce cottage industries, to be chosen, taught, and overseen by her and her family: '[v]ery simple ones, of course,' insists her Aunt Eve. 'Knitting, and embroidery, and plain sewing, and woodcarving, perhaps' (*G* 294). Giannetta's plan, like Alison Barnard's and Beatrice Burke's, proceeds to place the well-intentioned upper middle-class female in a maternalist relationship with her tenants, underscoring the peasants' lack of agency. The historical specificity with which Mulholland describes Giannetta's investment, however, sets her apart from the quainter efforts of the two other upper middle-class philanthropist protagonists, and also more closely reflects home industries projects instituted by the Gaelic League and The Irish Countrywomen's Association,<sup>336</sup> as a way for rural families to make ends meet in Ireland rather than emigrating.<sup>337</sup>

Expressing a similar spirit of landlord beneficence, *Marcella Grace* places Bryan Kilmartin against both absentee landlords and Fenian thugs provoking a campaign of agrarian violence. A former Fenian himself, Kilmartin sees the error of his ways after

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<sup>335</sup> Enda McKay, 'The Housing of the Working Classes 1883-1916', *SAOTHAR*, 17 (1992), 27-38.

<sup>336</sup> Founded in 1911.

<sup>337</sup> MacPherson, p. 135.

attending Cambridge (it is, of course, somewhat ironic that he needs to go abroad—and to be absent—to learn this lesson) and now believes in political rather than violent solutions to Ireland's land issues. Kilmartin returns to his family estate from London where he had gone, in much the same vague but well-intentioned way as *A Fair Emigrant's* Somerled or *The French Wife's* Molyneux, 'to try to stir up a little interest among members of Parliament', this time on the subject of the purchase clauses of the land act (*MG* 176). It is now his hope that 'Ireland might be made and ought to be made, by her own exertions, a peaceful and contented country [...] where no rents are paid and unbought leases are held in perpetuity' (*MG* 173-174). Kilmartin himself hopes to set an example for his fellow landowning upper middle-class.

As Marcella meets her new tenants, they recount the sacrifices made by the tenantry to pay ever-rising rents to the deceased Mrs O'Kelly. One tenant tells her that 'me brother-in-law [...] is away in England workin' at the harvest, an' he'll bring a bit o' money home wit him' (*MG* 230). He admits that, but for a recent illness, he would be 'in America like the rest o' them that sends a pound now and again to help to stop the gap' (*MG* 230). Here Mulholland depicts the hardship that tenants experience with a fairly sympathetic picture of emigration as the means by which desperate family members of tenants can help their families, while also emphasising that emigration is an unwelcome necessity forced on these obliging peasants by the landlords' bad behaviour—a necessity which either good stewardship by the upper middle-class or the sale of land to tenants would obviate. As it turned out, the 1903 Wyndham Act would encourage the upper middle-class to sell off portions of their estates through laws that promised

landlords increasingly attractive prices and cash payments; the 1909 Birrell Act would eventually make sale to tenants practically mandatory. Though clearly reading the writing on the wall for Irish landlords, Mulholland's tone is never strident, instead remaining morally instructive and seemingly sympathetic to both sides of the political spectrum.

These scenes serve to exemplify the larger themes of stewardship and philanthropy that circulate throughout upper middle-class novels, demonstrating Mulholland's belief in the central importance of, as Murphy observes, replacing 'Protestant Ascendancy class of landowners with a suitable class of Catholic gentry.'<sup>338</sup> Mulholland's upper middle-class novels consistently detail one of two forms of philanthropy: she tends to advocate either selling one's land outright in a way advantageous to the tenantry or remaining so as to fulfil the responsibilities of benevolent landlord (including, but not limited to, improving the socioeconomic circumstances for potentially emigrating peasants). The latter, not surprisingly, appears to be the option Mulholland favours—or is at least more comfortable in advocating to her readership.

All of the authors discussed in this section propose their personal brand of solution to the problem of landlordism in relation to peasant emigration. Butler, in advocating an abstract political stance, never seeks to engage with the realities of those

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<sup>338</sup> James Murphy, "'Things Which Seem to You Unfeminine': Gender and Nationalism in the Fiction of Some Upper Middle Class Catholic Women Novelists, 1880-1910", in *Border Crossings: Irish Women Writers and National Identities* (Tuscaloosa; London: University of Alabama Press, 2000), pp. 58–78 (p. 61).

of, say, Mulholland; instead, she characteristically couches her vague solutions to Ireland's agrarian conflict solely in terms of revolution and independence from Britain—a strategy for which the quality of her fiction suffers. Tynan, who resists such blatant political intervention, or at least privileges literary quality over it, maintains a discourse that emphasises encomium to Ireland's 'soil' and prefers to advocate for a sort of benevolent dictatorship led by well-intentioned Irish upper middle-class. Of the three, however, Mulholland is the only author who appears to be weighing the questions put to the upper middle-class landlords as to the next steps taken in the face of increasing legal pressure through successive land measures favouring the peasantry. Mulholland's realism suggests that she not only understands the link between land issues and emigration but that she had a certain measure of sympathy for the plight of peasants forced into emigration by rack-renting landlords. Rather than mere fodder for romances that underscore upper middle-class convention, Mulholland appears to have sought to shed light on weighty political and social issues by means of fictional narrative.

### **Variations**

As its title would suggest, Geraldine Cummins' *The Land They Loved* addresses several of the themes touched on in this chapter; however, given its timing (it is the only novel in this study written after World War One), it strikes at those themes with an entirely different tone and style from earlier works discussed in this study, reflecting its distance from either Revivalist peasant melodrama or upper middle-class romance. In what could loosely be termed a peasant romance, Cummins' characters differ dramatically from,



say, Mary Butler's abstractions; here, more fully-fleshed out farming families are depicted as part of a eulogy to the land and political tolerance. As has been discussed elsewhere in this study, Cummins, alone of the authors here, resists condemnation of her returnee emigrant protagonist. However, despite this more progressive stance toward migration, she continues to stress the importance of land to the psychological makeup of the peasant farmer, despite the fact that the peasant farmer is vastly different from, say, those of Mulholland's early works. Here, instead of victims of poor harvests and rising rents, Cummins' characters are strong farmers who finally reap the benefits of peasant proprietary and the potential that lies in the land.

Cummins' work functions as a sort of bookend to Butler's political discourse: though Cummins' narrative is devoid of both landlords and evictions, land is again both the subject of encomia and a politically volatile entity. While both authors address the subject of British interests versus Irish nationalism, Cummins's critique of the divisiveness that affected Ireland at the time of writing is more muted, instead calling for neutrality and cooperation among the proponents of Irish and Anglo-Irish interests. Unlike Butler, Cummins is never drawn into explicit political comment in terms of constitutional politics in her writing; instead, she elides the explicit power struggles for the land (and the larger struggle for the body politic of the country as a whole), but still makes it clear that ownership of the land is a peasant farmer's right and purpose – itself in tune with a nationalist politics. And while both narratives focus on the sacrifices to be made for the land as both 'land' and 'soil', and while Cummins' depictions are still

frequently romanticised, her focus, unlike Butler, is the Irish peasantry themselves and the ways that the land should unite them.

Cummins' encomium to land begins while Kate is still aboard ship, reminiscing about harvest time in rural Ireland, which under other circumstances would be far less likely to inspire reverie. She imagines

[t]he long line of workers stooping and rising, the rustle of dry hay under her and, the beating of strong sun and rain in her face, the race against time, the fear in their hearts, the ominous banking up of black clouds in the west, the glow of exhaustion, of the race won, the storm of rain just when the stooks were saved beating upon her and drenching her through. She was going home to that; her heart leaped with joy at the thought. (*TLTL* 2)

Here, Cummins acknowledges the paradoxical nature of deriving pleasure from what would otherwise be thought of as the drudgery of extreme physical labour with little economic recompense (a situation similar to the conditions prompting Tynan's 'Wayfarers' departure). Here, that 'fear' and 'exhaustion' have, for Cummins' protagonist, taken on a mythical importance. Even the rain, too, is a heroic adversary—cast far more positively than usual depictions. Although Cummins eschews the fairy-tale references so frequently found in Revival-era fiction, her ode to the Irish countryside is no less romantic, underscoring the theme of land-as-soil so common to nationalist discourse. Her language suggests that the focus on Kate's return (unlike that of Sabina Doolan or Mary O'Murrough, as was touched upon in Chapter three) centres on her

devotion to the land as a geographic and cultural entity, without concern as to how she will be received socially. This reverie incorporates both her affection toward the land itself and the way Kate perceives herself in it. When arriving at the farm, Kate

knelt down and took up a little earth, cradling it for a moment in the palms of her hands and then letting it slip slowly through her fingers. Ah! How she loved the land; how she could work and be its slave; how she longed to live and die near it, away from hot streets, away from the hard pavements, away from the interminable miles of houses. This is what she had come back for; this is all she desired. (*TLTL* 12)

While briefly establishing a similar contrast between city and country to others we have seen, Cummins, unlike other authors under discussion, avoids condemnation of the urban cityscape as such, instead focusing on the rural land as ‘bone of her bone, heart of her heart’, this image reminiscent of the biblical account of the creation of Eve from Adam, suggesting that rural Ireland is a sort of prelapsarian Garden of Eden (*TLTL* 21).<sup>339</sup> More importantly, this language marks a proprietary bond between the farmer and land, for the first time employing romantic rhetoric from the perspective of a female peasant herself and not framed by the admiring visiting tourist, as in the case of Tynan’s or Butler’s short fiction, or a male narrator who merely voices a Revivalist-style tribute, as in the case of Mulholland’s Father Tim Melody.

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<sup>339</sup> Genesis 2:21 states ‘And Adam said, This *is* now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh’. *The Holy Bible* (Camden: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1972).

The novel's most striking passages are those relating to the emptiness which greets protagonist Kate Carmody upon returning to Droumavalla. Depopulation in this instance is more complex than merely emigration: Kate returns home to witness the aftermath of rural emigration, agrarian strife, and World War One. She notes that '[t]he district had been emptied of its young men in the flower of their age; very few of them would ever return. Nearly all the men of Kate's generation were gone, and she would see their faces no more.' Kate's aunt underscores this sentiment, averring that

[i]t isn't like other countries [...] the emigration drew a dale of young men to Ameriky before the War. And now the big battles have taken the rest. Oh, the stranger will come to Droumavalla. Many a good name will be gone from it for ever. (*TLTL* 45)

Kate fears that in a few years' time, 'when the old people were dead it would be an empty land' (*TLTL* 45). Unlike Mary Butler's hyperbolic nationalist rhetoric which suggests that emigration would lead directly to rural genocide, the tone of Cummins' character reads like genuine mourning focusing, like Tynan, on the individual cost of exodus rather than the tense political context in which the discourse is set. With a greater specificity of incident and family, the author gives a face to rural depopulation and thus an intimacy not found in previous narratives. This specificity speaks to the quality of the narrative, as Cummins successfully camouflages didacticism in a discourse which would have naturally evoked empathy in her readership. Kate witnesses the absence of

[t]he O'Briens of Courlas, the Moriartys of Dundellerick, the Roches of Kilcully [who] had no descendants save three in America. They would not come back; there had been no room for them on the land when, before the War, farming was but a poor trade, and fishing not what it used to be [...] So the district would be deserted, and the old Irish names that had been bound up with the soil for hundreds of years before the Union, that had struggled through the miseries of the famine times, and were taking firm root again in the twentieth century, would now be swept from it—buried in the grave of the Great War. (*TLTL* 45-46)

Unlike Mary Butler's call to action and sense of urgency in the face of rural emigration, Cummins regards it as a *fait accompli*. Kate's experience of rural depopulation emerges not from the perspective of one witnessing departing masses, but as one returning to a community which has lost the battle.

Cummins' tone of disappointment and hopelessness upon Kate's homecoming is perhaps a more forceful argument against emigration than earlier, more strident entreaties, as it addresses both pre-war emigration (due to the inhospitable landscape) and the toll of the Great War itself. Although Cummins never openly criticises the choices made by those Irishmen who fought a British war at the behest of John Redmond, she emphasises the loss to those who remain behind in a depopulated landscape, just as other, earlier statements against emigration. This could be considered a muted reproach to this kind of emigration, and to the politics behind it (Cummins did, after all, write about rural life for the Abbey Theatre, which suggests her nationalist

inclinations), but her narrative remains focused on the individual level of suffering and not the more immediate political discussion.

This sense of loss foregrounds the novel's central conflict, which focuses on Kate's search for a sense of identity and ownership on the land. Kate admits that it is 'the land that called her back' and has returned with the hope of running a farm of her own, thereby, Cummins admits, necessitating a marriage—one which Kate anticipates with either of the neighbouring Turpin brothers (*TLTL* 52). Here, however, Cummins makes explicit the national fissure in an era when some of Ireland's young men were fighting for Home Rule with the Irish Volunteers and others who chose to fight for 'plucky little Belgium' with their British occupiers.<sup>340</sup> One of these brothers, Steve, dies while fighting with Sinn Féin in the 1916 Easter Rising and the other, Michael, in France while fighting with the British (he, like many Irish recruits, was persuaded to enlist by John Redmond's belief that Ireland's aid would help secure Home Rule). Cummins ostensibly remains neutral with regard to the decisions made by the two brothers: as Kate insists to Eugene 'what does it matter if they fought for Sinn Féin or the British? What does it matter which way they died? Sure they were two good men [...] Aren't they equal before their God now?' (*TLTL* 80). For Kate, neither brother is at fault, as both were invested in serving the land, though in diametrically opposite ways. The brothers' conflict serves as a microcosm through which to demonstrate the Irish-Anglo-Irish

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<sup>340</sup> While [t]here is no agreement on the total number of Irish soldiers who served in the British Army and Navy in the First World War', 'Professor Keith Jeffery [of Queens University, Belfast] gives a figure of 210,000.' 'Irish Soldiers in the First World War', *The Department of the Taoiseach* <[http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/eng/Historical\\_Information/1916\\_Commemorations/Irish\\_Soldiers\\_in\\_the\\_First\\_World\\_War.html](http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/eng/Historical_Information/1916_Commemorations/Irish_Soldiers_in_the_First_World_War.html)> [accessed 13 May 2014].

conflict—an era which Allen asserts was Ireland's most fractious.<sup>341</sup> Kate's discourse here suggests Cummins' investment in the setting aside of individual resentments in favour of national unity.

Cummins' judgement instead falls on those who did not attempt to mend the inevitable rift caused by the brothers' conflicting political choices. She points specifically to the elderly John Turpin, who refuses to hang a photo of Michael in his uniform on the wall next to Steve's portrait because, as Eugene explains, 'there are Sinn Feiners about here [and] he's afraid he'd be boycotted, his cattle drove off him or the land ploughed up, if he'd the photograph of a British soldier hanging on the wall of his house (*TLTL* 80). While Cummins sidesteps specific discussions of this sort of agrarian violence, Kate pleads with Eugene to attempt to resolve the quarrel by hanging both photos next to one another, telling him that 'it's for you to make it equal between them now [because] [t]hey're two sons of the house, whatever their politics may have been' (*TLTL* 81). Through Kate's entreaties, Cummins appeals to her readership for tolerance in anticipation of the Anglo-Irish and Civil Wars.

Kate experiences the regret of not been present to forestall the two brothers' rift, thinking that 'perhaps she might have prevented the quarrel if she had stayed at home' (*TLTL* 38). She also resents not having accepted their offer of marriage when it was proffered several years previously: '[b]itterly she regretted her foolish flight to America. Only when she came back had she discovered how deeply she cared' (*TLTL*

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<sup>341</sup> Nicholas Allen, *Modernism, Ireland and Civil War* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 17.

32). Through this scenario, Cummins underscores the returned emigrant's sense of loss and failure in what rings clear as anti-emigration rhetoric: having sought a life somewhere more dynamic than rural Ireland ('a winding and uncertain track' having 'caught her fancy'—language vaguely reminiscent of Catholic pamphlets' remonstrance), Kate returns in search of a sense of personal ownership and is thwarted from realizing that which she so easily sacrificed just five years ago (*TLTL* 55-56). Here, Cummins' discourse invokes the melancholy language of land-as-soil in order to close the gap between romanticised 'soil' and pointedly political discussions of 'land'. Passages like those above echo Butler and Mulholland's politically-charged rhetoric which maintains that remaining on the land requires personal sacrifice for the benefit of the collective—though for Mulholland this is motivated largely by a spirit of Christian sacrifice.

It is significant that Cummins places emigration against a backdrop of Irish soldiers leaving Irish shores to fight and die for a British war. Sacrifice, here, takes the form of young Irishmen who left either for economic reasons, as soldiering promised a reliable source of income (yet another form of emigration), or in the hope that Irish cooperation would be rewarded with Home Rule.<sup>342</sup> The conflict that arose between those who fought on two fronts—those who remained and fought for the land against colonial settlers whilst in Ireland, and those who left and fought for Ireland whilst with British forces—remains an undercurrent throughout Cummins' narrative. Although Cummins resists rebuking those who emigrate under either circumstances, Kate's keen

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<sup>342</sup> R. F. Foster, pp. 194–195.



sense of regret at leaving, and the decimated landscape to which she returns, suggest that Cummins advocates remaining on the land. The discourse, importantly, is never drawn into explicit political comment in terms of constitutional politics in her writing; instead, Cummins elides the explicit power struggles for the land (and the larger struggle for the body politic of the country as a whole), but still makes it clear that ownership of the land is a peasant farmer's right and purpose—itself in tune with a nationalist politics. It is ironic, however, that Cummins is so muted about the issue of Irish soldiers fighting in the Great War; this may be a function of the era in which the book was published, the volatility of the issues discussed, and the English readership she might have anticipated.

As has previously been noted, Eugene, the sole remaining Turpin brother and heir to the family land, functions in the narrative something akin to Eoin O'Gara in *The Ring of Day* as a personification of Ireland: slavishly devoted to the land, he is also physically lame and, though intelligent and ambitious, entirely passive when dealing with his abusive father. Eugene's struggle to remain on his father's farm in the face of consistent physical and emotional abuse suggests colonial landlord-tenant relationship (Eugene's physical infirmity serves as a symbol of the rural peasant hobbled by colonial rule). Upon each disagreement between father and son, the elder Turpin threatens to will the land to Eugene's sister 'who's married in the States' and will 'let it to a grazier' out of sheer indifference if Eugene refuses to abide by his wishes (*TLTL* 50-51). It is this devotion to the land which Kate alternatively disdains (she perceives Eugene's sacrifice as passivity) and admires (it echoes her own desire to remain on the land). First, Kate

attempts to convince Eugene to achieve his farming ambitions elsewhere, that he should '[g]o off to the States [and] get land in Texas as I was telling you' (*TLTL* 49). His immediate reply is that 'I love Ireland and Droumavalla, and why would I leave it for a foreign land?' (*TLTL* 50). Later, when Kate again suggests that he move away from his father's farm and pursue work elsewhere, Eugene tells her that

I wouldn't count as one at all if I hadn't this streak of earth behind me. Sure I'd be nobody if I was a labourer. What would be the good of my knowledge of stock and crops and weather? Every farmer thinks he knows best. I'd have to do as I was told. In a town I'd be worse than nobody. I'd feel all astray. The streets put fear in my heart. I couldn't live in them; they'd choke me. But I can tell you, Kate, if I'd Coomacarn at my back I'd feel like a king. Ah, there's little use in talking. You don't know what I'm meaning, what it is to be hungering for land, to have it there all about you, to be working in it month after month, watching it the winter, spring, and summer through and always to have the dread of losing it. (*TLTL* 69-70)

Eugene's speech is an extraordinary counterpoint to rhetoric by earlier authors in that it both replicates it (the tone of pathos emphasising the primacy of rural Ireland over the urban cityscape, for instance) and presents an alternative rhetoric: here, unlike earlier depictions where the farmer is a mere passive victim of circumstance, Eugene—despite his domestic situation—stresses his independence as a farmer—it is only in leaving rural Ireland that he would have to 'do as [he] was told.' Furthermore, employing the same language of reverie as Kate upon her initial return, Eugene takes this rhetoric one step

further, tying peasant identity to soil as well as land, repeatedly tells Kate that 'the land makes the man' (*TLTL* 69).

Later in the narrative, upon her return to the village after a hiatus in Dublin, Kate's brother claims what Kate herself will come to believe, that Eugene's willingness to suffer these abuses over the years is actually a testament to his strength and endurance. In a statement well-suited to Mulholland and Butler, and to Revival-era anti-emigration rhetoric, Denis chastises his sister's desertion of Eugene, and, by extension, rural Ireland, during his period of duress:

I wonder you didn't ever see what a strong man Eugene was to stay on at the farm and bear his father's bullying without a word. Surely, if he had been weak, he'd have gone off with himself. And he'd be earning a poor labourer's wage now instead of having a fine farm of land, a good balance at the bank and he the leader of the whole countryside. (*TLTL* 317-318)

This statement, certainly an extension of the novel's on-going encomium to the land through pastoral imagery, underscores Cummins' suggestion of the moral validity of communal suffering over individual initiative. The mention of economic benefit adds a new dimension to earlier nationalist rhetoric that privileged an anti-materialist stance, again demonstrating both Cummins' degree of realism and her distance from earlier, more idealised and abstract narratives.

Kate, while not a classic demure heroine, is a practical and ambitious one; through a sort of Irish adaptation of biblical parable Cummins demonstrates through Eugene that the last do indeed come first, and that Kate, if she is truly worthy, will learn

and profit through her self-abnegation and devotion to the land. While Cummins' narrative is significantly more nuanced than Butler's analogous statements regarding peasant women's responsibility to remain on the land so that it may thrive upon independence, the two authors' political motivations are not entirely disparate. Both authors couch political discussions of 'land' in Revivalist imagery of 'soil', creating parallel narratives that, while separated by socio-historical context, tone (Cummins's discourse resists blame of the English and judgement of the Irish who travelled to swell their military ranks), and literary style (and quality—Cummins' narrative is technically superior), had in many ways similar intent. Both women support a nationalist agenda that fixes the peasant's identity on the land; however, in the tense socio-political context of 1919, and with a mixed British-Irish readership, Cummins is obligated to handle these issues with a greater degree of sensitivity.

### **Conclusion**

Like other Revivalist-era writers, the authors discussed in this chapter all employ a rhetoric which idealises the land and draws on familiar rhapsodic images and tropes that ally Ireland with other lands, mythical and otherwise, which are seen as holy, blessed or Edenic. The authors are also frequently forced to concede, however, that the land can be—and is frequently—both inhospitable and a source of economic and social tension and that there are instances when emigration approaches becoming a necessity. Each author responds in her own way and with varying degrees of realism to issues surrounding land, both in the sense of soil and as land: topics like rural desolation, both as the cause and result of peasant exodus, tenant evictions, and the abuses of

landlordism politicise the concept of 'soil', effectively tying both soil and land to emigration. The tone of their depictions and the degree to which their stylistic choices (in terms of historically-based realism versus abstract sentimentalism, for instance) are linked to the authors' engagement with social and economic realities, complicating an anti-emigration argument or rhetoric and creating tensions for authors seeking to propound that rhetoric. The authors' treatment of these tensions varies a great deal, being obviated through abstract political language (Butler), reduced to literary pathos which focuses on the 'soil' rather than the 'land' (Tynan), or addressed with at least a modicum of realism that recognises the inherent problems associated with 'land' while seeking to maintain an encomium to 'soil' of adequate literary quality (Mulholland).

Cummins' narrative serves as coda to this discussion, as it benefits from the chronological distance between her novel and the previous works examined, the last of which was Mulholland's *Father Tim*, published in 1910. Here Cummins creates a proto-feminist protagonist who is the only peasant emigrant under discussion not under scrutiny for her decision to leave, or to return to, the land. Ironically, the context for emigration in Cummins' work is represented by a setting in which one conspicuous absence in the rural landscape is that of the Irishmen fighting abroad in the Great War. While both her work and the other works under discussion in this chapter devote a great deal of space to singing the praises of the land, they offer different perspectives in response to the socio-political events which shaped them. Whereas Butler's texts are shaped by her participation in the Gaelic League and her commitment to Irish independence, as we have seen, Cummins' discourse is influenced more immediately by

the Great War and civil unrest, and this alters the terrain upon which the agency and duty of the peasant emigrant is examined. Common to both Butler and Cummins, and to all authors under study here, is the preoccupation with the role of the peasant female in relation to the Irish landscape. Although she is depicted with a varying degree of empathy, depending on the author's perspective and purpose, the image of the peasant female is never decoupled from either 'land' or 'soil'.

## Conclusion

“Keep your mouth and your legs closed. Keep your ears open—  
an’ between ye, let ye send home the slates.”<sup>343</sup>

In his 1978 autobiography *Nineteen Acres*, John Healy tells the story of his grandmother who was obligated to send five daughters, one after the other, to New York in the early years of the twentieth century. The quotation cited above, a variation of which were her final words to each girl as she left the family farm, reveals a variety of issues addressed throughout this study: peasant chain migration, the financial necessity of women’s emigration for remittances, the according sense of family duty, and the emphasis on sexual purity and the warning against potential dangers that lay in wait for young women emigrating alone. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of Healy’s more recent work, however, is that it addresses all of these issues—unlike the other works discussed—from the perspective of the peasants themselves.

The upper middle-class authors discussed throughout this study resisted, to varying degrees, the idea of portraying the potential benefits of women’s emigration, as it flew in the face of the Catholic nationalist ethos that privileged the needs of the community and the nation over individual initiative. The language in Healy’s quotation stands in opposition to Butler’s teary departures—while Healy’s female predecessors may or may not have been eager to leave, he writes that their emigration was viewed as a regretful but natural option for peasants who knew that economic opportunity would have to be

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<sup>343</sup> John Healy, *Nineteen Acres* (Achill, Mayo, Ireland: House of Healy, 1987), p. 2.

found elsewhere. For Butler, Tynan, and Mulholland, dwelling on the idea of individual economic opportunity outside of Ireland was not in their political interest. Emigration was contrary on a variety of levels to the nationalist cause which all three authors sought to serve: the retention of the peasant emigrant female was an essential component of a larger political discourse that urged women to remain within the domestic sphere in order to serve familial, community, and national aims. Correspondingly, the authors' political ethos dictated the necessity of depictions of self-abnegation and victimisation as aspects of, as Stewart puts it, a 'nationalist mythology which so insistently demands the placing of the community above the individual'.<sup>344</sup> Certainly the authors discussed in this study are writing much earlier than Healy, in very different political circumstances, and with different motivations—all of which affect their treatment of the peasant emigrant figure. For these writers, emigration contradicted both the nationalist rhetoric that tied peasant women to the land (in terms of both their reproductive and cultural functions) and also the belief shared by all authors under examination here that a woman's rightful place—particularly at a time of political volatility—was in the home. While Cummins' narrative complicates this idea by creating a peasant protagonist who is condemned neither for her choice to leave nor her choice to return, her romance narrative nonetheless interacts with the emigration story in a way familiar with respect to the writers in this study—here again loyalty to the land is rewarded.

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<sup>344</sup> Bruce Stewart, 'Inside Nationalism: A Meditation upon Inventing Ireland', *Irish Studies Review*, 6 (1998), 5–16 (p. 9).



The degree of sympathy with which the female peasant emigrant is depicted is, by and large, the result of the author's political intent and ideology. Mary Butler's involvement on the executive of the Gaelic League and her journalistic contributions to a variety of nationalist publications, chiefly among them the nationalist periodical the *United Irishman* and Gaelic League pamphlets, suggests a likely commitment to the political dimension of discussions of emigration. Her depictions of peasant women, as we have seen, tend to be both passive and silent, in need of the beneficent protection (and social control) of the Catholic upper middle class to whom she addresses these works; this representation serves her broader political discourse regarding anti-emigrationism as a way to preserve the (Catholic) rural populations, and preserving where possible continuity in ownership of the land through the physical retention of the rural peasantry, thus serving as a key plank in her argument for Irish independence.

Katharine Tynan, an early advocate of Home Rule and devoted supporter of Charles Stewart Parnell (even after his fall), stated in an 1894 interview that '[f]or the first time Irish literature has a chance, owing to the present lull in politics. Political strife has strangled literature in Ireland. The Irish Literary Society started at a very fortunate time'.<sup>345</sup> This statement, published, rather ironically, in a British magazine, demonstrates Tynan's investment in the creation of literature that filled the gap left by Parnell and offers the possibility that she sought, at least initially, to employ her writing as a vehicle for political ends. Nonetheless, her treatment of political themes tends to be more muted than Butler, particularly when dealing with issues around peasant emigrant, due,

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<sup>345</sup> Percy Parker, 'Katharine Tynan at Home', *The Woman's Signal*, 11 January 1894, p. 17; Standlee, p. 11.

at least in part, to her mixed Irish-British (and increasingly, American) audience. The fact that she privileges depictions of the individual woman's experience over emigration's political after-effects suggests a greater empathy with emigrant women and also an interest in the literary (and saleable) aspect of the emigration scenario. By privileging recognisably Irish themes and scenes of pathos among the rural Irish, Tynan succeeded in creating popular fiction intended for, at least in part, a British audience who were not particularly sympathetic to the issues affecting the Irish peasantry at the time. In this way, her fiction served nationalist aims by humanizing a socio-political phenomenon, reducing large-scale peasant emigration to an individual level.

Rosa Mulholland, as has been seen, falls between the two, as she (like Butler and Tynan) was wedded to Catholic rhetoric which maintained that women's duty was to the family and community and resolutely in the home (despite the increasing numbers of women seeking employment outside the home or farm), and that her value rested in a strategic marriage and consequent reproduction so as to maintain continuity in terms of both land and the nationalist education of her children. As a result of her experience as a philanthropist, however, she was in a position to recognise the constraints faced by peasant women that might lead them to emigrate, and much of her fiction addresses these tensions. From a political standpoint, Mulholland's depictions of the emigrant female reflect an investment in the preservation of Big House culture with the replacement of the Protestant Ascendancy with a benevolent Catholic gentry rather than Home Rule. Clearly, her interest in peasant emigration was less as a nakedly political issue than a social one, however. This fact is revealed in her more sympathetic

treatment of peasant women's circumstances for emigration, a less condemnatory tone, and the superior quality of their works as literature, which is linked to the level of explicitness of the political message (as seen, particularly, in novels like *The Return of Mary O'Murrough*).

Geraldine Cummins' work reflects a new era in women's writing about women. While she too propounds an anti-emigration discourse, her treatment of the returning emigrant female is more complex and intimate than the aforementioned authors, revealing the returnee's sense of ambivalence and disappointment upon returning to a post-World War One Ireland. The fact that her peasant female chooses to leave and returns of her own volition—exclusive of financial necessity—sets her apart from other emigrant women under discussion and suggests a new, positive, proto-feminist figure, despite Cummins' acknowledgement of the challenges of post-World War One life for rural women. Although Cummins' narrative reveals a nationalist agenda similar in many ways to the other authors under examination here—her work still highlights the importance of fealty to the land—her ideological priorities clearly lie more with women's issues than with politics as such. This fact is reflected both in Cummins' own work with the women's suffrage movement and in other, later literary representations that demonstrate women's dearth of choices in an increasingly conservative rural Ireland. This makes her work a source of insight—despite her doubts about her own literary abilities<sup>346</sup>—and the smallness of her oeuvre a source of regret.

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<sup>346</sup> In her book about automatic writing, Cummins bemoans the fact that she writes 'very slowly and laboriously and ha[s] to revise the MS again and again.' Cummins, *Swan on a Black Sea*.

The central themes running through this study are framed within a certain *fin-de-siècle* religious discourse. That the novels examined here regularly employ the language of ecclesiastical intervention demonstrates the ideological proximity of the authors to the Catholic Church and conservative nationalism, specifically with regard to women's domestic duty. The works of Butler, Tynan, and Mulholland all borrow language from religious journalism of the time as a device by which to detail the different but compatible responsibilities of both peasant and upper middle-class women. Furthermore, the authors' placement of the priest figure at the centre of emigration narratives serves to underscore the Church's role as moral guide for peasant women and as collaborator for upper middle class philanthropists attempting to stem the tide of emigration. The trajectory of this study, however, demonstrates the tensions that increasingly arise between the author's desire to adhere to and simulate Catholic nationalist rhetoric and their recognition of, and empathy with, the difficult circumstances that prompted peasant women's emigration.

The trope of 'Holy' Ireland as a site of spiritual regeneration and physical and moral safety appears regularly in the works discussed, as the idea of Ireland as a haven was central to the Catholic nationalist anti-emigration rhetoric. The authors' use of religious language, and the trope of the gentry and clergy uniting to stem emigration reinforces both the idea of the need for upper-middle-class paternalism to aid the lower classes and the ill-preparedness of peasant women to face the dangers to which they will be exposed once outside the quasi-enchanted borders of Ireland. Resultant discussions of moral, frequently sexual, danger facing women who leave Ireland's shores

further elaborates a moral critique of the peasant female shown as naïve. Despite their efforts to recreate the peaceful haven of rural Ireland while away, they are nonetheless unable to thrive when distanced from the guiding hand of the clergy and community.

The risk associated with emigration is also seen to extend to the peasant returnee, whose inevitably fraught homecoming will demonstrate the difficulty (or impossibility) of reintegration into the home community, regardless of the circumstances under which she left. This scenario, as a function of anti-emigration rhetoric, seeks to remind young peasant women that leaving, even when condoned, suggests desertion and disloyalty. This critique does not extend to upper middle-class women, however, who are subject to neither temptation while away nor community scrutiny upon return. Instead, the upper classes can and do achieve personal and financial regeneration elsewhere, and their emigration and return (unlike the peasant) routinely suggests the potential economic and philanthropic benefit to the community and nation.

Relationships are rarely romantic in these novels, and this realism emphasises the dearth of options for women, particularly peasant women. The lack of sentimentality and the rather crippled version of romantic love is pervasive in the fictional works under discussion—despite the fact that almost all are ostensibly romantic narratives. In Butler's novel, quasi-religious political rhetoric eclipses romance; the romantic language in Tynan and Mulholland's romances also tend to be muted, downplaying passion in favour of nationalist zeal or the necessity of emigration. The message relayed by these stories generally tends toward one of three options: rewards

for good behaviour for remaining in Ireland (as is the case with *The French Wife's* Kitty Donegan, for instance), cautionary tales, where heroines are robbed of love, ruined, or condemned to disastrous relationships because of emigration (as Mary in 'How Mary Came Home' or Chris in *The Tragedy of Chris*), or romance as a compromise, as the protagonist is no longer young and attractive, or too old for motherhood (*Norah of Waterford's* Sabina Doolan, or Mary O'Murrough). Although this latter point is clearly related to the fact that one of the main reasons to oppose emigration is its threat to the population, the authors demonstrate their sympathy in this context, depicting women functioning within a limited number of choices and an economic reality that all women seem to face. As the Catholic nationalist ideology was not particularly supportive of female agency or choice itself, the tensions within these narratives with regard to blame, duty, and responsibility and the fate of the peasant emigrant female register the authors' sense of resistance or complication to that nationalist agenda through the recognition of the challenges rural women were obliged to face.

Any historically-grounded discussion of Ireland necessitates a discussion of issues surrounding land, and the time period in question is certainly no exception, as it follows the trajectory from the late nineteenth century land wars through to the Great War. Here the twin themes of 'land' as geographic entity and 'soil' as romanticised idea serve as fodder for nationalist imagery. While all the authors seek to reinforce the idealised version of Ireland in accordance with this ethos, increasingly complex and ambivalent narratives reveal their recognition that the land is sometimes neither safe nor regenerative, and that more fruitful alternatives often lie on soil other than Ireland's. As

we have seen, the image of barren land is a loaded but ambiguous one; although beautiful, it can serve both as a reproach to the emigrant that abandoned it, and as a testament—as some of the writers do acknowledge—to bad management and rapacious landlords. These images, depending on the tone with which they are treated, can send a clear message to the middle class and potentially land-owning readership and can remove from the emigrant at least some of the blame of leaving.

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As has been seen, the gender politics underpinning these narratives encompasses issues of duty, agency, and blame. While the authors all recognise, to a greater or lesser extent, the difficult situation emigrating women often face, emigration is still consistently depicted as disruptive to the natural course of peasant life (particularly because it might facilitate land transfer, and result in depopulation both directly and in terms of a falling birth rate). Considering the fact that this study examines women's writing about women, we might expect more a sensitive treatment regarding concerns that affected individual women, such as the tension between personal and community needs or women's own sense of ambivalence about emigration. The authors of these narratives, however, generally followed the Catholic nationalist ethos that made peasant women the repository for Ireland's cultural identity, therefore counselling against their departure. Gray and Ryan point out that 'roles are not merely imposed on women; women also participate actively in the process of reproducing, maintaining, and

modifying their roles in the production of national identities.<sup>347</sup> Thus, to whatever degree the author might have empathised with the situation facing peasant women, their depictions reflect that responsibility and the associated blame with failing to fulfil it. The fact that the authors under discussion here regularly overlay depictions of the protagonists with Mother Ireland tropes merely reinforces this idea that women's domestic role is bound up with national identity and thus their departure suggests an abandonment of Revival-era national ideals.

This picture is mitigated to a certain extent, however, by textual instances where the authors do demonstrate a particular sensitivity or understanding of the women's perspective. The creation of proto-feminist characters like Mary (in 'How Mary Came Home') or Julia (in the *House of the Crickets*), the tone with which they are depicted, and the tensions that their desires provoke in the face of family duty expose us to moments where the works register the pressure of the women's impossible situation. The impression of women between the rock of economic ruin and the hard place of lonely, dangerous emigration does surface in the works under discussion, many of which give some sense of the ambivalence, or even the bitterness towards the necessity of tying one's fate to a man and an often unwelcome marriage—either as the alternative to emigration or as its cause.

The authors express this ideology through carefully constructed moments of pathos: as we have seen in elements such as tear-jerking scenes of departure and return, images of eviction and the empty landscape, and the ploy of making the happy

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<sup>347</sup> Gray and Ryan, p. 124.



ending contingent on remaining or returning to Irish soil, these strategies all disrupt standard patterns of the romance narrative, aiming to influence an upper middle-class readership. Although the spectrum of stylistic modes in this study moves from late-nineteenth century melodrama—as witnessed in Butler’s weepy departure scenarios—to more realist depictions, like *Giannetta’s* use of politically volatile eviction scenes, all authors sought to employ variations on these strategies to stir their upper middle-class readers to action. Peasant females are, accordingly, granted increasing amounts of agency in this trajectory towards realism as the political message becomes less prominent, and they are portrayed with increasing empathy: Tynan and Mulholland, for instance, both recognise the limited opportunities for women that force them to consider options like the mercenary marriage. As their fiction becomes increasingly realist, Tynan and Mulholland seek to address a variety of issues affecting peasant women at this time. Suicide, for example, is discussed in *Father Tim’s* scene of a young rural woman’s defenestration; infant mortality appears as the direct result of emigration in both Tynan’s ‘How Mary Came Home’ and Mulholland’s *The Return of Mary O’Murrough*. Prostitution, and its relationship with Ireland’s dangerous and sinful exterior, is central to the plot of Mulholland’s *The Tragedy of Chris*. While the tone with which they treat these topics is ambivalent—in each case, the topic underscores emigration’s disruptive and potentially disastrous influence—it does allow a certain kind of empathy for these situations nonetheless, demonstrating the authors’ interest in social issues, and as women writers about women’s choices and fates.

In her study of Kate O'Brien's 1936 emigration bildungsroman, *Mary Lavelle*, Legarreta Mentxaka asserts that '[f]iction could reach where political tracts could not, and novels sometimes changed popular perception of a controversial issue to the extent that it brought about historical change.'<sup>348</sup> While it is impossible to quantify the impact that these works might have made on a reading public, clearly the fictional works discussed here take a position on the issues surrounding peasant emigration that draws from and develops discourses from Catholic nationalist journalism. Harnessing certain types of discourse, they take a stance which speaks to both peasant and gentry readers about national responsibility. By adapting fictional devices such as pathos, point of view, and narrative technique, they create entertaining literature and sympathetic characters that nonetheless support a political agenda. While there exists little extra-textual evidence to attest to the fact that the novels were attempting to bring about socio-political change, the authors' personal histories and their choice of literary subject suggest that these works aimed, to varying degrees, to influence their (presumably female)<sup>349</sup> readership and call them to action to protect other Irish women from the perils—sexual and otherwise—of emigration, and to revitalise the communities left behind.

While these authors demonstrably subscribed to the Catholic nationalist ideology that condemned women's emigration, and this unquestionably influenced their

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<sup>348</sup> Aintzane Legarreta Mentxaka, *Kate O'Brien and the Fiction of Identity : Sex, Art and Politics in Mary Lavelle and Other Writings* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2011), p. 38.

<sup>349</sup> Flint asserts that certain novels 'were not only frequently directed outwards towards notional women readers, but were received, classified, and interpreted by both publishers and critics within a context of what women should and should not be reading, and what they expected from their books.' Kate Flint, *The Woman Reader, 1837-1914* (Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 13.

fiction, it is difficult to determine the degree to which they were using the fiction as an ideological vehicle, and the degree to which they were merely following a popular contemporary literary trend that employed emigration as a subject matter. Given the fact that all of the authors under discussion here (with the exception of Butler) did eventually stop writing about peasant women's emigration—despite the fact that it remained an important socioeconomic issue well into the twentieth century—suggests that changing tastes of readership might have affected the saleability of such images. While popular novels addressing female emigration between the wars do exist (and in some cases sold very well), depictions of the phenomenon tend to couch the subject very differently. In these cases, the tale is frequently recounted from the perspective of the emigrant herself, making a statement with regard to the dearth of choices open to young women, though of a slightly different character and without the same political significance (Kate O'Brien's *Mary Lavelle* is one key example, Kathleen Coyle's 1928 novel *Liv* and Rosamond Jacob's 1938 novel *The Troubled House* are others), or even emigration novels written with a far lighter tone, eschewing commentary on Ireland's political state entirely (Maura Laverty's 1944 novel *No More Than Human*, for instance). Clearly, however, particularly Mulholland and Cummins, were greatly invested in women's issues, and both continued to write other, very different, works that demonstrated their commitment to addressing social problems through fiction.

Perhaps most importantly, this thesis aims at pointing up the literary insights offered by a group of seldom studied authors who sought to influence their readers' understanding of emigration as a political and popular issue. Due to the fact that the

authors discussed here have been neglected and in some cases all but forgotten, there is little extant criticism—either from the time of writing or current—from which to draw, and this thesis is the first to bring them to a discussion of emigration in fiction and to initiate a conversation regarding the relationship between gender politics and literature with regard to women’s emigration.<sup>350</sup> The discoveries discussed here present a substantial addition to a body of scholarship with regards to the women authors and, in some cases, activists, who wrote primarily to influence their readership at a pivotal period in Ireland’s political and social history. Their contributions to that body of work demonstrate to present day scholars on one hand the tensions that existed for the authors who, though ideologically in line with Catholic nationalist rhetoric that placed peasant women within the home, were sympathetic to the concerns facing those women. On the other hand, their depictions, in many cases, enable us to view rural peasant emigration as a multifarious phenomenon that was far more diverse than other accounts would have us believe. In short, they complicate both the picture of the rural peasant and of the phenomenon of women’s emigration at the turn of the century.

Aside from Heather Ingman’s 2007 work *Twentieth-century Fiction by Irish Women: Nation and Gender*, little retrospective work has been done that examines the connection between women’s history and literature in terms of emigration. This thesis has pursued that connection with respect to an earlier period of history, however, and

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<sup>350</sup> The unearthing of primary source material in order to prove this link between Irish women’s writing, emigration, and the Catholic Church has been a painstaking endeavour. For instance, I found Mary Butler’s second serialised novel only serendipitously in digital issues of the *Weekly Independent*, as it is currently unindexed. Anti-emigration pamphlets, along with many other Catholic Truth Society pamphlets, were another serendipitous find, randomly bound and unindexed in Ireland’s National Library.

one that has proven pivotal as regards women's investment in writing about emigration as both a political and popular issue. The relationships maintained between the authors under discussion and with Catholic and nationalist organisations indicate their commitment to writing to support a similar ideology. As a consequence, their collective literary contribution confirms the extent to which upper middle-class women were involved in creating and perpetuating this politically-freighted image of the peasant emigrant woman. For, although the authors examined in this study approach the subject of women's emigration from different perspectives and with different aims, their collective oeuvre gives us as readers insight into both the popular perceptions of the peasant emigrant female at the end of the nineteenth century and the way in which those women were employed by the Catholic Church and nationalists as an icon for a larger socio-political phenomenon.

Contrary to Ward's previously cited assertion that women were largely silent on the subject of emigration,<sup>351</sup> this study suggests that not only were women not silent but that they were invested participants in a shared (though not monolithic) ideology and that they employed fiction as a means to influence a target readership on key subjects regarding women's national and domestic responsibility. Women writers in the period under study and throughout the twentieth century have proven integral to emigration debates, allowing readers a glimpse into the circumstances behind women's decisions to emigrate from a variety of perspectives and with varying measures of empathy. Furthermore, in many instances, the study of women's writing about

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<sup>351</sup> See introduction, page 6.

emigration can tell us a great deal about the writers themselves: indeed, perhaps Tynan's sympathetic portrayals of emigrant women were at least in part a projection of her own sense of deracination whilst newly-arrived in England. Having long been a pervasive feature Irish life, the subject of emigration would also have lent the authors under study a way to reach out and appeal to expatriate audiences and even, potentially, to those peasant emigrant women living abroad. Aside from the works of Mary Butler, whose political urgencies fix her works to a very specific socio-political context, the theme of emigration in fiction has continued to evolve, as is evidenced by the number of novels published into the twenty-first century that continue to employ the theme in a wide range of contexts.

The literary insights gained from these works complicate a picture of the *fin-de-siècle* female emigrant that has frequently been either oversimplified or entirely inaccurate. Moreover, they open up a discussion of a variety of significant and far-reaching issues such as the relationship between the individual and society, national identity in relation to geographic space, and the effects of colonialism, postcolonialism, and decolonisation, among many others. The phenomenon of economic post-recession emigration has given new life to many of the questions raised in this study, and while a consideration of the 'new' emigration falls outside the remit of this work, returning to earlier stories told about emigration in this vastly different context brings again to the fore the relationship between gender politics, economics, family duty, and deracination. It will be interesting to see how twenty-first century emigration will be portrayed in contemporary women's literature, and how scholars will employ earlier examples while

revisiting those connections. This study's examination of these recurring themes speaks to the continuing power of the story of emigration, the difficult choices that people face, and literature's power to affect those who read them.

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